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FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

The Counterfeit Heiress

by INSPECTOR JOHN HARRIGAN

Chief Roger O'Brien Has Written "TRACKED TO CHINA" For Our Next Number.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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THE COUNTERFEIT HEIRESS

A MYSTIFYING DETECTIVE STORY

By INSPECTOR JOHN HARRIGAN

CHAPTER ONE

TRAPPING AN EMIGRANT

TOWARD the close of a chilly October day Castle Garden was thrown into an unusual bustle of confusion by the arrival of several transatlantic steamers within a few hours of each other, all heavily freighted by thousands of emigrants. The rotunda presented a strange appearance with its numberless inmates of every nation.

They were attired in diversified costumes, and spoke different languages and dialects. In one quarter squatted a family of Turks, notable for their fancy costumes, filth and squalor. Irish, Scotch, English and German peasants were characterized by their light hair, blue eyes and blonde features.

In another part were the darker people from Italy in picturesque suits of velveteens; Scandinavians, Portuguese and Spaniards.

The customs officials and steamer officers were busy dodging hither and thither, pushing, hauling, running, yelling and swearing amid the throng. The Garden, as usual, was odoriferous as a pig-sty, and about equaly as clean.

The French emigrants had centralized themselves around a stove in which a couple were striving to broil some herrings for their supper, meanwhile socially chatting together in their polite, gesturing way.

Out of the whole hundred French people only one was particularly conspicuous. She was a beautiful girl of eighteen, who sat apart from the rest in a retired spot, looking aimlessly about, at a loss to find some occupation to vary the monotony. She was alternately listless, and red-eyed, then eagerly expectant in a fervent way, gazing

up suddenly as any one approached, a sigh of disappointment invariably following, then a sad, pitiful look crossing her face as she became cognizant of her mistake. She was of medium stature, plumply built, with features of a rare type. Her hair was long and yellow, fastened up in a heavy coil; her eyes and eyebrows jet black; her ears and mouth small, and her fair face oval in shape, while the prettiest of aquiline noses graced her singularly handsome face. She wore a tight-fitting dress of gray fabric, a lace fichu around her throat, held by a pearl pin to match her ear-rings, while her small shapely hands were encased in yellow lace mitts, and her tiny feet in high-heeled shoes with checked cloth uppers.

The baggage, consisting of a trunk and a valise, stood on the floor close beside her, and on her arm she held a thick corded and quilted mantle. There was a certain charming grace about the girl which seemed to distinguish her from her coarser fellow-emigrants which, being duly perceptible, occasioned some disdain on the part of the women, while it elicited the outspoken admiration of the men. Several times within the past hour the girl appeared to have been very much annoyed by finding herself rudely stared at by a man who had been standing by the wall. This personage had features of a far from classical order, while his garments were in the last stages of dilapidation. His face was clean-shaven, red and repulsive; he had but one eye, and that was as bright as a ferret's, nor had he much of a nose to boast of, as that organ had evidently been knocked out of joint at a certain period of his life by something harder than itself.

The hat he wore was cocked rakishly on one side of his bald head, and he had a nasty leer, meant to captivate the heart of the object of his coarse admiration. But she evaded his glance after the first time, and left him to leer at the mocking-bird in her jaunty little felt hat. While so engrossed, he was approached by a tall, slender Frenchman of thirty, in whose every action the grace of a panther appeared. The newcomer had evidently just entered the Garden. He was flashily attired, showing a profusion of jewelry, and bore himself as if just landed from a foreign country. His black hair was worn in puffy curls, and a glossy silk hat shaded his dark-skinned face and black eyes. He wore a black mustache that was trimmed short, and carried a fancy cane in his gloved hand. Reaching the one-eyed individual, he leaned over, hastily whispered to him, and as the other nodded assent, he walked toward the girl. She raised her eyes as he stopped before her, bowing urbanely, and a look of anger, half fear, swept over her face.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Adel is becoming satisfied that her uncle never meant to meet her here, as I said, is she not?" he asked, smiling, in English.

"By no means, monsieur," she replied, coldly, in the same language. "My uncle knows I came from Paris alone, and that I have no home but with him since my parents died, so why should he not keep his word?"

"You have been here a day now, and he has not yet appeared."

"True. But he will yet come."

"I fear, Miss La Grande, that he never meant to see you."

"Then why did he write me to come to him from Paris?"

The other shrugged his shoulders suggestively.

"You had better have acceded to the proposal I made you on our voyage over the ocean. It is not yet too late," he said.

"I have no desire to marry; therefore monsieur favors me too much."

A dark scowl crossed the man's face.

"Be careful how you reject me!" he exclaimed in harsh tones. "I but confer a favor upon you, girl. I am rich —you, poor——"

"Monsieur forgets himself, using such allusions."

"Pardon me," he replied, bowing. "I merely reiterate it."

"Leave me, sir," she said. "You insult me."

"You shall regret this!" he exclaimed, white with anger.

She, too, was very pale, and trembled; but she pointed to the door.

"Go!" she said, observing that he did not move.

"Once more let me beg of you to reconsid——"

"I have told you I do not care for you," she cried in exasperation, "nor do I yet. You are comparatively a stranger to me, sir."

"Still I am of good family, and good social posi——"

"Say no more, please," she interrupted, unceremoniously. "I wish to be left alone. All the way, during the voyage, you have been rudely addressing your uncalled-for attentions to me, and although I was then unprotected, and quietly submitted to your threats, you must remember, sir, that here, on land, I have the law to protect me. You should be ashamed of yourself, knowing my deplorable circumstances, to be so persistent. I want nothing to do with you at all. But you may know one thing, sir, which is that, although my means prevented me coming here except in the steerage, I am one who probably has been reared in, and more used to, every luxury than yourself."

She had risen to her feet, with her finger still pointing to the door, and her beautiful eyes flashed fire. The man slunk back a pace under her withering gaze, and then bowing, with an awkward attempt to disguise his chagrined feelings, he wheeled around abruptly and walked away. The girl fancied she had heard a muttered imprecation and avowal to have a speedy revenge as he left her, but she gave it no second thought, merely attributing it to his natural perturbation, and then sat down again. As she did so she heard a subdued laugh by her side, and turning she saw a man sitting close by. He had approached so quietly and mysteriously that she knew nothing of his presence. To digress, it may be well to give a description of this mysterious personage now.

He was dressed in a dark suit, and wore a derby hat. She saw that he possessed a form of medium proportions, but strong and sinewy. Bright, keen gray eyes, a smooth face, with soft effeminate features, that were belied by the solid chin; a pointed nose and small hands and feet. It was one of those inscrutable faces, as unreadable as a stone-wall, but as volatile in its change of expression, at the owner's will, as the best mimic possessed. In a word, the man was so peculiarly characterized that he could metamorphose his face and actions to match any disguise he might assume; and this trait accorded well with his vocation. When the girl met his glance she blushed violently, with a strange thrill convulsing her, although she could not tell why, as she never saw him before. It might have been the excessive force of animal magnetism. He handed her a card on which she saw some words written. Reading it she started and glanced inquiringly at him.

"*Beware of Jules Berteaux; he means to harm you,*" said the card, and turning it over she saw printed on the opposite side in fancy type:

RALPH PINKERTIN, *Detective.*

Then she looked up again, but the mysterious man was gone. He had vanished as suddenly and completely as if

he had melted into thin air. Doubting the evidence of her senses, the girl rubbed her eyes and gazed around again; but she saw nothing of him. The evidence of the card in her hand was indubitable, however. But she was shrewd enough to tear it up into fine pieces and throw it away, resolving to profit by the advice it gave her. She observed that no one was near her but an old man, and he was looking at the Turks. The peculiar similarity of his clothing to that of the detective struck her for a moment. But she felt satisfied it was not him by seeing the old man's back bent with age, a cane in his gloved hand, spectacles on his nose, a gray beard on his face and a slouched hat on his head. She had hardly concluded noting these things, and was beginning again to wonder where the detective had so mysteriously vanished inside of a moment, when a district messenger boy, accompanied by one of the Garden officials and the dilapidated fellow who had been leering at her approached.

"Are you Miss Adel La Grande?" asked the official.

"I am."

"Well, here is a message for you, miss," said the boy.

He handed her an envelope, which she opened.

It contained the following lines:

"My Dear Miss:—Come to me at once in the carriage I have sent. Your uncle, Leo La Grande."

"Ah! at last!" exclaimed the girl, in an ecstasy of delight, as she finished perusing the message, and sprang up from the bench. "My uncle has sent for me."

"One moment," said the cautious old official. "Let me see that note, please. You mustn't get in any trouble."

"Oh, it is all right," she replied, smilingly, as she handed him the note to read. "I *knew* he would not forget me."

"Note seems genuine enough," muttered the official, with a suspicious glance at the dilapidated individual. "All right," he added, addressing the boy. "Is this his coachman?"

"I am, yer 'onner," said the one-eyed man, with a flourish.

"There's her trunk and valise," said the official, moving away.

"Orright," said the coachman. "Here, young fellow, take that 'ere walise, an' I'll take ther trunk."

In a few minutes, formalities having been satisfactorily performed, the baggage was put on a coach, and the door was opened for the girl. At the same moment the old man with the gray beard emerged from the rotunda. The girl looked at a handsome woman sitting in the coach with some surprise.

"Here's yer niece, ma'am," said the one-eyed man, awkwardly. "Git in there, miss. That lady's yer aunt."

"What!" exclaimed the woman with well-feigned joy as she caught the girl and further forcibly dragged her into the coach, while she rained showers of kisses upon her face; "is it possible this is our little Adel—the daughter of my husband's brother? Impossible! Yet, dear me, it must be."

The coach by this time was rolling more rapidly away than was consistent with city ordinances through the gray cold twilight of the October evening. It was some moments before Adel recovered from her astonishment; then she settled herself comfortably and asked:

"Then are you really my aunt?"

"Of course, my dear; I am your Aunt Frances," replied the woman. "Your Uncle Leo was sick in bed, and couldn't come after you himself, so he sent me instead. Oh, my! what's that?"

"What?"

"Didn't you notice that the light of the little window in back of us became obscured?"

"Night is fast falling."

"No; it is not that. I suppose it was the flap falling down. I am exceedingly nervous to-night, somehow."

Perhaps she might have been more so if she had known that a slouched hat was obscuring the light of the tiny window, while the ear of a gray-bearded old man was glued to the back of the coach, listening to all she said as he "hitched" behind on the rear springs of the coach.

It was a comical sight to see a venerable-looking man stealing a ride in the open street; but fortunately darkness was falling fast, and but few people noticed it. The woman remained silent a moment, then asked:

"When did your parents die, Adel?"

"Three months ago," replied the girl, as tears started to her eyes. "I was left homeless and penniless. I had no relatives in the world but my Uncle Leo in New York. You know how I told him that kind neighbors were supporting me until I should hear from him, when I wrote, asking him to take me. I knew he was very wealthy and would not refuse my supplication. Then you know how he sent me the money to come here, and the kind words of cheer that soothed my troubled heart. I sailed in the steerage in order to economize what money he sent, as I needed clothing and other things."

"You speak English like a native."

"Ah, madam, but you know my poor mother was an American woman; so, naturally, I speak English as well as French."

"How did you know your Uncle Leo married me?"

"I knew nothing of it. He never wrote us that he was married. Contrarily, he led us to suppose he was a single man, and I was astonished when you said you were my aunt."

"Oh," replied the woman, with an uneasy laugh, but with the most cool, brassy assurance, "he meant to surprise you, my dear. However, you have gained an aunt by his wedding."

They spoke desultorily at some length, the woman sustaining the conversation in a strain which, though guarded, was intended to indirectly draw from the girl every detail of her family knowledge and antecedents; the old man outside, meantime, overhearing all that was said.

The coach, driven by the one-eyed individual whom the woman addressed as Dan, rolled up Broadway, then turning down a by-street, it presently went rumbling up Lexington avenue as far as Fiftieth street. A motion to stop, and with remarkable agility the old man sprang off and dodged behind a telegraph-pole. The two women alighted before a tall brown-stone dwelling, no lights shining in any but the hall and bed-room windows, and as the coach drove away the woman rang the bell, and they were admitted by a negro hall-boy. The young girl's trunk and valise were carried into the hall by the boy, and they ascended the stairs.

A rolling, clicking sound reached Adel's ears, accompanied by the clink and jingle of something, interspersed with smothered voices of people in the rooms they passed.

It was dark in the upper hall, and a man came down the stairs, and encountered them on their way up.

"Is this your niece, Mrs. La Grande?" he asked in a low tone.

The girl started, and peered hard at him, wondering why it was that his voice sounded so familiar, but she could not distinguish his features in the gloom.

"Yes, John," replied the woman. "How is Leo?"

"He feels a little better."

"Is any one up in his room with him?"

"No one."

"Just see to my niece's baggage, will you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And have a bed-room prepared for her."

"I have one ready now, ma'am. Come up and I will show you."

"Very well. Come on, Adel, up to the next floor."

The upper floor was as dark as the lower, and the man led the way.

"Wait here, John," said the woman, "in Mr. La Grande's room, until I show my niece her sleeping apartment."

The man entered a room, and Adel was shown a small hall-room.

Emerging from it after a moment the woman pushed open the door of the room the man had gone in, and they entered. The room was in an obscure light, as the gas was turned low, but Adel saw that it was a sumptuously-furnished apartment. She did not observe that the room had but one window and one door, the window being iron-barred.

Then she directed her gaze at the bed, and to her surprise saw it was unoccupied.

"Why, I thought my uncle was in here?" she said, turning to the woman.

"So he is, my dear; he is in bed. Go and speak to him."

A doubtful look crossed the girl's face as she approached the bed.

"Uncle Leo!" she exclaimed timidly.

The man John stepped from behind a window-curtain and turned up the light. At the same moment the woman uttered a mocking laugh, and gliding out of the room banged the door after her retreating form.

A shriek of dismay burst from the girl's lips, and she recoiled as she saw that the man was Jules Berteaux.

"Young lady, you are trapped!" he exclaimed. "My little plan has worked like a charm."

"Oh," she panted in affright; "what does this mean?"

"It means just this," he exclaimed; "you are to remain a close prisoner in this room until we choose to liberate you. We have been watching for you since you wrote from France that you were coming."

"Monsieur, why am I to be kept confined here?"

"So that you will be out of our way in the accomplishment of our design. We are playing a deep game, and the first step toward success has been taken by capturing you."

"Good heavens!" wailed the terrified girl; "why am I lured in here? Oh, is no one near to help me?"

"Yes!" exclaimed a voice close by. "Stand where you are, Berteaux, for I have a bead drawn upon you!"

A man sprang into the room through an open panel in the wainscoting of the wall and covered the shrinking Frenchman with a pistol.

"Furies!" yelled Jules Berteaux; "it's Ralph Pinkertin, the detective!"

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROBBERY AND MURDER

ONE week previous, Leo La Grande, the diamond broker, was put into an unenviable frame of mind, on his return from a week's vacation and pleasure-trip to Washington, to find that his house had been robbed of several thousand dollars' worth of valuables. He immediately sent word to the Inspector of Police, and that eminent functionary detailed an officer to the house from the force, to look the matter up. In the meantime, La Grande had also sent to the detective agency of Ralph Pinkertin, asking for an officer, setting forth that he had offered the municipal force a reward of one thousand dollars for the apprehension of the criminals who had perpetrated the deed, and stated that the same amount held good for any one who arrested the culprit. Half an hour before the headquarters detective arrived Ralph Pinkertin personally presented himself at the house, which was one of a row of brown-stone residences on Madison avenue, above Forty-fifth street. He was ushered into the rear parlor by a servant, where he met Leo La Grande, who was sitting in an easy-chair in the center of the room reading his newspaper and smoking a cigar. La Grande was a wiry little Frenchman, short and thin, wearing his silvery-gray hair cropped close, a gray mustache and imperial on his face, and his black eyes and eyebrows strongly contrasted against his delicate white skin. He wore alligator-skin slippers, a quilted velvet smoking-cap and jacket, while a brilliant set of diamond studs scintillated on his immaculte white shirt-bosom. He arose, greeted his caller cordially, bade him be seated, and poured him a glass of iced claret from a decanter he had been imbibing from that stood on the table beside the drop-light with a box of Perfectos. Having drunk the wine with much gusto, complimented the Frenchman upon his excellent cuisine, and lighting a fine Havana, the detective begged to be put in possession of the details of the robbery.

"It is told in a few words," said La Grande, shrugging his shoulders only as expressively as a Parisian can do. "I felt tired of my business duties, took a vacation of one week in Washington, which ended yesterday—Tuesday—and when preparing to return home I received a dispatch from my housekeeper to the effect that the house had been robbed night before last. Arriving home, I found that over five thousand dollars' worth of jewelry, silverware and clothing had been stolen. I at once notified the police, with an inventory and description of the missing articles, most of which have my private mark, and then sent for you."

"Why did you send for me?" asked Pinkertin.

"For the simple reason that I have faith in the Pinkertin detective force. I shall employ you in the case, and if the municipal force chooses to handle the case, too, all well and good. It is my intention to keep your employment a secret from the other officer. I will have the satisfaction of knowing I have a competent man on the trail who will study my interests."

"It is a good advice," acceded the other.

"And the reward——"

"Excuse *me*, Mr. La Grande, I accept no reward. I work wholly upon the merits of my case, and ask no more than my expenses and a fair salary as I proceed with my investigations."

"So much the better. Your principle is really commendable."

"Give me details—such as you sent to the central office," said Ralph, drawing out his note-book and pencil, and preparing to make notes as the discussion progressed.

The broker dictated from a memorandum, while the other jotted down the meager facts in his book.

"Do you reside here alone?" asked the detective.

"No. My secretary lives with me."

"You have no family?"

"None whatsoever."

"Any relations?"

"Only one living in France."

"Who comprises your household?"

"A cook, chambermaid, housekeeper and two servants besides myself and Fred."

"You mean your secretary, I preume?"

"Exactly. But he is beyond all suspicion."

"Nevertheless, I wish to see and question him."

"Preposterous. Still your wish shall be complied with."

He pulled a bell-knob, and a servant appeared.

"Request Mr. Silvergale to step in here a moment, Mary."

"Yes, sir," replied the girl, bowing and withdrawing under a sharp glance from Pinkertin.

A few minutes later Silvergale entered. He immediately became a cynosure of the detective's keen eyes. He was tall, slim, about twenty-three years of age, and a perfect blond from his crisp, curly light hair, blue eyes and fair skin to the tips of his almond-shaped nails. His weakness seemed to be a passion for dressing stylishly.

"Do you want me, Mr. La Grande?" he asked.

"This gentleman wishes to speak to you."

The broker introduced them by name only, Pinkertin furtively reading the other at a glance to be a sly, unscrupulous young man.

Evidently the detective's ocular investigation was very satisfactory, for he shot a significant look at La Grande.

"I think I have met you before, Mr. Silvergale?" said Pinkertin.

"It is possible, sir."

"Were you not once a variety actor?"

The other started involuntarily, and seemed much confused.

"N-n-no, sir," he stammered.

"Oh, then I am probably mistaken," replied the detective, with an odd smile. "You must excuse me, for I really thought you was Henry Montague, the lightning-change-man and motto-singer, who murdered his wife, and disappeared a year ago."

The secretary's face grew fairly purple, and he writhed under the detective's glance.

"Oh," he replied, with a nervous laugh, suddenly regaining his composure by a strong effort, "you certainly *are* mistaken."

"Do you know anything of the burglary committed here?" asked Ralph, still eyeing the secretary closely.

"Why, no," he replied in surprise. "How should I?"

"Weren't you in the house at the time?"

"No, sir; I was away, calling on some friends in Brooklyn on the night of the robbery. In fact, Mr. La Grande saw these friends subsequently and incidentally learned of that fact."

"Were you in the house the day before the burglary?"

"Yes. But I am at a loss to understand these interrogatories. With all due respect to you as a friend of Mr. La Grande, I must say I consider this cross-examaniation highly offensive and impertinent on your part. You are a stranger to me."

He evinced some asperity which Ralph knew was assumed.

"Oh, don't get flustered," said the detective carelessly; "I am merely striving to centralize the cuprit. I'm a detective."

Silvergale started slightly; but the news was no more than he secretly suspected. He was shrewd and diplomatic.

"Oh!" he ejaculated as if surprised; "in that event I must submit, of course, to your suspicions. Clearly, though, you have no right to imagine me guilty."

"My business is to suspect everybody."

"Have you concluded your questions?"

"Yes, for the present. You may go."

The young man left the apartment.

"Well?" asked the broker.

"He will bear watching," whispered Pinkertin.

"Do you suspect him of the crime?"

"Not exactly. He may be an accessory—a tool in the hands of professionals. With your permission I will now view the scene of the burglary. Show me your safe."

They left the room together on a tour of investigation throughout the house. Their footsteps had hardly died away downstairs when a damask curtain at one of the windows was swept aside, and a woman emerged and glided toward the hall-door. She was about forty years of age, slender, gray-haired, and dressed in plain black with white *crepe-lisse* at her throat and wrists. Her face was one of striking placidness, her features soft, smooth and honest-looking. She leaned over the banisters listening to the diamond broker downstairs. Near by was a parlor hall-room, the door opening outward against the side-wall. Silvergale stepped from the open doorway.

"Marie," he whispered.

She turned like a flash. When she saw who it was she held up her finger warningly.

"Hush," she exclaimed. "Pinkertin is here with a sharp eye on you, Fred. He suspects you, and means to watch every one in this house."

"What shall I do?"

"Submit to his surveillance like a man."

"But he may learn——"

"If you keep your wits about you he'll learn nothing."

"Won't he know you?"

"No; at least I think not. Anyhow, he has no evidence against me for anything except seeing me in Mother Mandledown's 'fence.' He could get me dismissed from my position as housekeeper here; that's about all."

"Hark! Here comes some one," exclaimed Silvergale.

They both hurried upstairs.

The moment they had gone the parlor hall-room door swung back, and Ralph stepped from behind it. He wore a satisfied look on his face, and ascending the stairs he met La Grande stumping around the dining-room, talking to himself to make any chance listeners think two people, instead of one, were down in the room.

"How did it work?" asked the broker.

"Splendidly. Your housekeeper——"

"Mrs. Lennox?"

"Ostensibly, yes—for a verity, a noted confidence woman known as Kate Madigan."

"Oh, come, come," said the broker, testily; "you are prejudiced."

"I'm afraid you are, Mr. La Grande—perhaps in love."

"Nonsense. You are too presuming, my friend."

"Oh, don't get mad. I know what I am talking about, and don't want to see you gulled by the shrewdest adventuress in New York. She and Silvergale did the robbery, I think."

"Prove your assertion. I don't believe it, though."

"Very well. Now let me investigate."

He examined the servants, found them innocent, as far as he could judge, of any implication, and then made a thorough examination of the premises in search of a clue to guide him in his work of hunting down the culprits.

The safe was in the dining-room, between the windows, and had been cut with a center-bit, the bolt broken by blowing powder into the clutch, and the valuables extracted in an undoubtedly professional manner. No tools had been left behind, nor could he find any clues. The silver had been taken from the sideboard, and the clothing from a trunk in the hall. Then he went to the window from which a pane had been cut with a diamond, and saw at

a glance that the work had been done by no novice. It was evident, too, that entrance had been forced from the outside, and that egress had been made by means of the door, which had been found unlocked the next day.

Closely questioning the broker again, he learned that no one, save Silvergale, besides himself, knew that the jewelry was contained in the safe. This jewelry consisted of several sets of diamond studs and cuff-buttons, a diamond necklace containing twenty-five gems, and several ordinary diamond rings. As Ralph was examining the window he saw a drop of dried blood on the casement. With his suspicions aroused, he lit a match and closely examined the glass frame in the casing, and was rewarded by seeing that one side still retained several jagged bits of glass, the edges of which were slightly discolored by blood. On the extreme edge of the jagged glass was a tiny speck of gold amid the congealed blood, and on the window-casing inside, and directly on a line with the bit of gold shaving, the faint imprint of a finger outlined by the blood on the black walnut. These gold and blood traces he at once removed. He had a clue at last. It was a very poor one, though; but it was better than nothing.

"What are you wiping away?" asked the broker curiously.

"A clue to the burglar."

"What is it?"

"He cut his finger in entering."

"Are you sure it was a man? You said he."

"Positive. The finger-print, although expanded in making the impression I saw, is too large for that of a woman. It was the second finger of the right hand."

"How do you know?"

"All fingers are slightly imperfect as to exact straightness. Grasping the window casing with the right hand, on the left side of the window, the impression of the finger slightly curves upward. The mark I saw curves upward. Besides, rings are usually worn on the second finger. Now, see this tiny bit of gold in my hand? It was on the edge of the glass, and had been scraped from a ring on the finger which was cut. I'll preserve this speck of gold for future use. It is all the evidence I can get so far."

A ring sounded at the bell upstairs at this juncture.

"Ah!" exclaimed the broker, "I guess that's the other officer.

"We will go up now, and I'll give him a show," said Ralph.

They ascended the stairs quietly, and turning the balustrade saw Mrs. Lennox conversing in low tones with a man in the hall. Ralph turned around to La Grande, smilingly, and whispered:

"Look out for that officer now, my friend." La Grande coughed.

The housekeeper started, recovered herself, and raising her voice to a pitch she exclaimed:

"Oh, yes, sir; Mr. La Grande is in. Step into the parlor, please."

"A plot," soliloquized Ralph. "She knows more about this affair than she'd care to tell, and evidently knows Ben Tattler, standing there, whose good graces she is enlisting."

Both followed the other detective into the parlor just as the apologizing housekeeper came hurrying out, and ran plump into La Grande's arms.

Ralph noticed that the old broker did not release her as quickly as he might have done, but gave her a gentle squeeze.

"Ah, ha!" he thought, "as I surmised—the old cove is a little soft on his 'fly' housekeeper, which explains his partiality and desire to screen her from blame. I'll have to 'pipe' her off. She will 'play' him for all he is worth."

Tattler did not evince much pleasure on seeing Pinkertin, but they deceived him when Ralph took his departure, saying:

"Well, Mr. La Grande, you'd better let the inspector's man take the case, as it is a little too complicated for me. Besides, I have other business to attend to just now."

"Very well," said La Grande, understanding the drift of Ralph's remark, and he went to the front-door with him, leaving Tattler in the parlor.

"I'll report to you as soon as I get my information," said Ralph at the door; "and meantime say nothing to any one of my engagement. I have only to add that Tattler is an unreliable man, and that you'd better keep a sharp eye on your housekeeper and secretary. Don't trust any one."

A moment later and he took his departure, while the old Frenchman re-entered the house to let the bloodhound of the law loose upon the track of the burglar.

Nearly a week passed by, Pinkertin prosecuting his hunt most diligently, when one morning he want into Mr. La Grande's office and told him that he had "spotted" a noted burglar named Dublin Dan, whom he had strong reasons to suspect was his man. This old offender was, he said, a one-eyed individual, who was connected with a powerful gang he was shadowing for various offenses, and he meant to surround the fellow with a cobweb of evidence from which it would be impossible for him to escape, although he was one of the slipperiest thieves in New York. He was evidently up to some game or another, as he had been hanging around Castle Garden considerably of late. Ralph's object was to ascertain what progress the municipal detective had made, but the old broker could give him no intelligence, as he had seen nothing of Tattler since the night they had met at his house. Mr. La Grande was in a dejected state that day, and seemed to be greatly distressed over some unknown thing that preyed upon his mind. He asked Ralph to call on the following day. Despite all of Pinkertin's questioning, he would say no more than that he would write out his trouble on paper and give it to the detective to consider at his leisure, in order to get his opinion.

With his curiosity aroused at this unsatisfactory explanation, Ralph left him. True to his promise, Pinkertin arrived at the old broker's residence the following morning and rang the bell. A startling surprise awaited him. The servant who answered the bell had just rushed downstairs, and now stood before him a picture of abject terror.

"What's the matter?" asked Ralph quickly, as he noticed the look of horror on the girl's face.

"Oh, sir! Heaven save us, the master is dead!"

"Where is he?"

"Up in his bed-room."

"Call a policeman!"

"All right, sir."

And as the frightened girl flew down the street, Ralph rushed upstairs into La Grande's bed-room. The door was wide open, and he saw the old man lying on the bed with his shirt-bosom torn aside, and a dagger in his bosom. The bed-covers were stained, but were not disordered. Nothing indicated a struggle, as everything was in its place. Pinkertin lost not a moment, but seeing first that the broker was really dead, he made a rapid but thorough examination of everything in the room. There was a ring lying on the bed, which he quickly seized and placed in his pocket, and on a desk in one corner three letters.

One was addressed to himself, the other to his business partner, John Howard, and the other to his lawyers, Messrs. Jow & Jummel, Center street. Ralph took possession of these, and seeing nothing else of value to himself save the knife in the bosom of the murdered man, he sat down and awaited the policeman, who soon came, accompanied by another. They knew Ralph, and he placed one at each door of the house, enjoining them to let no one enter or depart. Word had been sent to headquarters, and inside of thirty minutes the proper authorities had charge of the house and its effects.

The municipal authorities made a fruitless examination, the coroner and his jury gave a verdict of "murder in the first degree by unknown persons," and Ralph then had an opportunity to view the knife the deed had been committed with. But he could get no clue of the murderer, as it was one of many thousands that every cutler sold of the same description, and was an old knife at that. Finding it impossible to glean any more, he returned to his office on Broadway and looked at the ring. It was a diamond, mounted with a ruby and sapphire, in the shape of a clover. Odd of design, it was not this that so suddenly attracted Ralph's attention, but a slight scratch on the band, worn inside of the hand. Quick as a flash he drew the speck of gold he had found on the window from his pocket, and found that it exactly fitted the scratch on the ring.

"By heavens, here is a mystery!" he exclaimed. "The burglar and murderer are one and the same person! Who can it be? Dublin Dan? What was the object of the murder? Nothing was stolen! And I could not find that La Grande had a single enemy in the world. I am puzzled. There is some deep mystery here. But I shall solve it! I'll watch Dan to-morrow down in Castle Garden, and feel it in my bones that through him I shall get the key to solve this plot. The death of La Grande shall not deter me from prosecuting this hunt."

CHAPTER THREE.

THE BLACK PIT

"PANEL-HOUSES" are an old innovation among the "crooks" of New York, and are mostly to be found in the oldest rookeries, which might have been built for purposes of protection; but in a well-arranged, modern house, it is fair to presume that the arrangement had been made for illegitimate purposes.

Berteaux's house was a tinsellated gambling-hell, frequented by fashionable men, and was not well known to the police.

"There was very little about this gilded resort that Pinkertin did not know; but he could not trouble Berteaux, for the simple reason that, in the first place, he had not authority to do so, being a private detective, and, in the second place, he had no occasion to do so, as Berteaux had never troubled him; moreover, he found it very convenient to know of the place when in quest of some refined criminal, as he frequently had "piped" his prey there and made a good arrest. Detectives, as a rule, made it a business to ferret out "crooked dives" of every description, as criminals of almost every stamp make it a point, from force of habit or force of some unknown attractive power, to spend all their time, while unoccupied, in places which respectable society has ostracised. Consequently, when a criminal is "wanted," the detective's first move is to search these places of ill-repute.

Pinkertin had merely made a rapid metamorphosis in his appearance in Castle Garden when sitting near Adel La Grande, and in the disguise of an old man had followed her to the house of Jules Berteaux. He at once saw that the scheme was to entice the girl in the house to keep her concealed, but when he saw that Dublin Dan was implicated he began to suspect that there was some other deep scheme afoot which, if properly investigated, promised to reveal one of the strangest mysteries on record. Dan was the man whom he suspected of robbing Leo La Grande, as the cracksman was well known to the detective to work after the fashion of that robbery. The clue in his possession subsequently tended to put Dan in a worse light, for if he had committed the burglary, then it was fair to presume that he had murdered Mr. La Grande, for the ring he found near the corpse was undoubtedly the same ring worn by the burglar! Added to this, he based his theory of a plot upon the circumstance of seeing Dublin Dan in the act of inveigling the niece of the murdered man into the gambling house for some purpose which might have something to do with the disposition of the murdered man's fortune. The detective suspected that the motive of those interested in the old broker's murder, and the work to dispose of his heiress, was to make a bold move to secure La Grande's fortune. He knew that he had a cunning, desperate and intelligent crowd to deal with, who could only be overcome by stratagem over-matching their own acuteness.

Although the death of the broker probably precluded his chances for compensation, Ralph, fully alive to the arduousness of the task he had undertaken to perform, was resolved not to give up the case until he had sifted it through. Perhaps his heart had been touched and thrilled by the beautiful girl, Adel, and she had proved an unconscious incentive who aroused his sudden and determined interest in the case. At all events, the detective did not feel exactly heart-free after seeing the lovely girl, and when he saw her thrown so completely into the power of the noted French sharper, Berteaux, his rage was at a fever-heat.

The man was dumfounded for a moment on seeing Ralph, as he did not know that the detective knew of the secret passages honeycombing the partitions of the house; but the detective's revolver soon brought him to a sense of his dangerous position, and in a moment he seized the girl and held her before him, exclaiming:

"If you shoot you will kill the girl first."

"Release her!" exclaimed Ralph.

"Not until you re-enter that panel. I would be a fool to do so."

"Then I shall shoot."

"Your pistol-shot will bring friends to my aid."

"I fear no one!" retorted the officer, who meant all he said. "This is a desperate scheme, and I mean to take desperate means to baffle you; for I will discover what your game is, despite your best efforts to down me."

At this moment Adel struggled to break from Berteaux; his clasp was like a vise, and her wildest efforts were as futile as those of a child. She still screened him.

"Will you release her?" asked Ralph again.

"No! I defy you!"

The detective's glance flashed along the sights of his weapon; there was a lurid gleam and report, and with a yell of pain Barteaux reeled, dropped the girl and sank to the floor, with a bullet in his leg. Ralph sprang forward a step, and a savage cry burst from the Frenchman's bloodless lips, as he rolled over and pulled a knob in the wall. There was a crash, a square aperture in the floor beneath Ralph's feet dropped inward, and the detective

fell into the hole. Instinctively he threw out his hands, and they grasped the edge of the floor around the hatchway. The girl fainted. One quick glance down into the hole showed nothing but inky darkness beneath him; and then he swung a moment, not knowing how soon his brains might have been dashed out in the bottom of that black pit. It was a terrible moment, and cold sweat burst out all over him. Then he gathered his strength and strove to climb up on the floor again. A grin overspread the Frenchman's face, and he drew a dagger from its sheath in his bosom and crawled over toward the struggling man, upon whom his eyes were fixed with a devilish look of malignant triumph. At the same moment there came hurried footsteps in the hall and a muffled, confused jargon of voices. The Frenchman paid no attention to it, but kept creeping closer upon his victim. Bang! bang! bang! rattled a shower of blows upon the panels, and a voice exclaimed in terrified accents:

"Open the door—quick! The police are upon us! Open the door! Open the door, will you? Oh! if we could only get into the panel before they come in!"

"Berteaux's sister," said a man's voice, "will admit the police as soon as all hands are hidden, and they will find nothing crooked about the place."

Still heedless of the excited clamor outside, the Frenchman reached the side of his victim, who was struggling, with fast-waning strength, to swing himself up out of the hole.

He raised his knife and made a lunge at Ralph; but missing his mark on account of the oscillations of his victim's body, he nearly plunged headlong into the hole himself. The dagger dropped from his hand down the pit. In a moment he recovered himself. Ralph was becoming weaker every moment, his arms and hands numb, and his head swam. He gazed up into the Frenchman's glaring, blood-shot eyes, and noted the venomous expression, with a sinking feeling at his heart. For a moment Berteaux gloated over his victim's misery, and then with the slow deliberation of a fiend he plucked the detective's fingers from their hold on the floor, one by one, until he hung by only one finger. A moment of suspense, the hold relaxed, and with a deep groan he plunged down into the depths. A moment later the hall-door burst open and a number of men rushed into the room.

"Kitty!" exclaimed Berteaux.

"Hello!" exclaimed a young woman—Berteaux wife; "what's the matter?"

"Close the trap and get one of the men to carry that girl through the panel into the secret room," he replied. "I'll explain later."

The girl complied.

A moment later all had entered the panel and closed it after them, leaving the room deserted. A few minutes elapsed, when the door opened again, and Frances—Berteaux's sister—entered the room accompanied by the inspector of police, an assistant district attorney and the detective, Ben Tattler, all of whom looked sharply around.

The woman was the same who represented herself to Adel as her aunt.

"Well, gentlemen, are you satisfied that your raid on my house to-night was superfluous?" asked Frances in sweet tones.

A quick, significant look flashed between her and Tattler.

"We heard a pistol-shot up here," persistently said the inspector.

"Excuse me, but I think you are mistaken," answered Frances, playfully tapping the official under the chin with her white swan-down fan, this motion making her white thin dress rustle and the diamonds all over her flash and flare with a hundred variegated lights. "Ah, you law-men are a cold-blooded, unfeeling lot, and are too ready to suspect a widow who keeps open-house of being the keeper of a gambling-place."

"Hold on," said the assistant district attorney, who had instigated the raid; and he walked across the floor and stooped over. "What does this mean, Miss Berteaux?" and he held up Pinkertin's silver-plated revolver to their view.

"Oh, that?" she replied with ever-ready wit. "Why, it is my deceased husband's pistol, which I had hung on the wall there, and it must have fallen down and gone off."

"People do not generally keep pistols hanging around loaded and cocked," said the inspector dryly.

"Cocked? What does that mean, sir?" she asked, feigning the utmost ignorance, as she elevated her eyebrows and distended her black eyes. "I really do not understand the technical terms appertaining to firearms."

The inspector gave a grunt of disgust and walked out of the room, followed by Frances, after she had placed the revolver upon the mantelpiece. The district attorney's assistant lingered behind. He had trod upon the trap, and the hollow reverberation aroused his suspicions. He was a smart man. An idea occurred to him, and acting upon it, he sounded all the wainscoting with his knuckles, the detective watching his every action like a cat. Offering no explanation to the officer, the district attorney walked out of the room with Tattler and preceded Frances and the inspector downstairs to the front-door, when Frances deferentially ushered them and five policemen out, the young darky gazing on in open-mouthed astonishment.

Half an hour later the gamblers emerged from their places of concealment between the walls, and the place was put in full blast again, with spies and lookouts stationed in the street to give warning in event of another descent of the police. While this was transpiring the inspector and the assistant district attorney rolled away in a taxicab, and Tattler re-entered the house.

"Well, she has eclipsed us again," said the inspector gloomily.

"She is a sharp one," replied the other thoughtfully; "but she has got Pinkertin on her track, and if any one can run her to ground he can, I swear."

"Pinkertin?"

"Yes; you know what a human sleuth-hound he is. I saw him yesterday, about the La Grande murder, and he placed a letter in my care until he called for it. He has been looking up the case for some reason of his own, and is shadowing a 'suspect' in Berteaux's house."

"But I have put Tattler on the case."

"That makes no odds, if Pinkerton wants a whack at ferreting out this murderer. There is some mystery about it, too, which I cannot fathom. Anyhow, I distrust Tattler."

"Why? He has proven to be an efficient officer."

"Well, he was mighty disinterested, if he was detailed to run in Berteaux. Why, man, that is a panel-house."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the inspector starting.

"I sounded the floor and walls. They were hollow."

"Well, well. I must inform Tattler."

"Oh, come, Mr. Thorn, you are prejudiced."

"Not at all."

"Oh, yes, you are."

The district attorney's assistant shrugged his shoulders coldly.

He had no desire to hold any argument on the subject.

It was merely a hint of warning to the wise, for he was a personal friend of Pinkertin's, and the detective had

expressed his views of Tattler in no very complimentary terms. They relapsed into silence, and the taxi rolled on, soon disappearing in the distance.

Tattler entered the parlor, and finding no one there he ascended the stairs and, giving a pass-word at the door on the next floor, he entered a spacial gambling saloon. The appointments of the place were luxurious in the extreme, with velvet carpets on the floor, oil-paintings on the beautifully frescoed walls, statuary and *bric-a-brac* tastefully disposed about.

There were lace curtains at the heavily-screened windows, electric call-bells, a billiard-table in an alcove in back, and the rooms were upholstered in scarlet satin and rosewood, with mahogany tables and chairs, at which numbers of men sat smoking and playing cards, faro and other games. Additional luster was given everything by a huge cut-glass chandelier in the middle of the room. A sideboard held numberless bottles of champagne and other wines, presided over by a negro. There were keno, roulette, *rouge-et-noir*, bagatelle and various other gambling devices in full swing when Tattler entered; and laughs of the victorious and curses of the defeated gamesters greeted his ears with the jingle of money, the rattle of dice, the clink of glasses and the click of the ivory balls and chips. Frances beckoned to him at the further end of the room, while she stood before a gilt-rimmed pier-glass, and together they opened a side door and entered a private room. This room was occupied by Berteaux, a stout woman of forty-five in plain street attire, and Berteaux's wife, Kitty. The latter person was bandaging Berteaux's leg, which had been pierced by a ball from Pinkertin's pistol. She was a short, slight girl of thirty, with baby features, soft skin, brown eyes, dark hair and tiny hands and feet.

"Here is Mother Mandeldown now," said Frances; "and Berteaux has been shot, but he won't tell me how it occurred."

"Was there a row upstairs?" asked Tattler.

"Yes. But he downed his man into the pit," said Kitty. "He knows what he is about; now hear what I say: The girl is locked up in the secret-room, but Marm Mandeldown had better take her."

"Vat you bay me ven I geep dot gearl?" asked the old "fence."

"I'll see to that," said Berteaux.

"Vell, you shent her aroundt by my blace, und I geeb her ash quied ash you vand."

"How did the man get up in the girl's room?" asked Frances.

"He must have entered the back-parlor panel and gone up," said Berteaux.

"Ah! Then he was acquainted with the secret of the panels?"

"It's no wonder," said Berteaux dryly, "for it was Pinkertin."

"Pinkertin!" she repeated in amazement.

"Yes. But he will trouble us no further. He is at the bottom of the black pit at the present moment," replied Berteaux.

The woman breathed a sigh of profound relief.

"I will speak to you on this subject later," she said with a significant side-glance at Mother Mandeldown. "I have something important to tell you privately, Berteaux."

Marm Mandeldown arose and left the room with Kitty, as they saw that their presence was not wanted. Berteaux looked askance at Tattler, who remained seated, and his sister burst out into a silvery peal of laughter.

"Oh, he's all O K, Jules," she said. "I want him to help us, and he will, whether he wants to or not."

The detective winced and glared angrily at her.

"This gentleman" continued Frances, "is a son of La Grande's housekeeper, and Silvergale is his step-brother."

"Ah, *sapriste!* I comprehend. We are all in the same boat?"

"Exactly. This, now, is the main point. We all work this affair on shares. Should the girl prove a nuisance she must be disposed of."

Berteaux nodded with a poor grace.

"La Grande had no heirs but the girl, and through her we must get that fortune. It amounts, as near as I can learn, to three millions. A nice little sum, eh?"

"Who got rid of the old man?" asked Tattler innocently.

"The coroner's jury said he died of assassination," said Frances.

"I know—but who did it?"

"The coroner's jury said the assassin was unknown."

"Doubtless—but——"

"Well, then, how should *I* know?"

Tattler held his tongue, for he saw that if Frances knew who did the deed she was not going to disclose it.

"Has Dan returned yet from the cellar?" asked Berteaux, who was fidgeting about uneasily on the lounge.

"No. He has been gone a long while, hasn't he? I sent him down to see if your victim was alive at least ten minutes ago."

"It is very strange that he don't return," said Berteaux, fidgeting again.

Then, as if unable to stand the suspense, he hobbled from the lounge to the hall-door, every movement sending a throb through his wound.

"I am going down to see what's the matter," he exclaimed.

Frances might have expostulated, but he vanished. He stepped into a weighted elevator and let himself down to the cellar. A trap-door under an empty barrel disclosed a flight of stairs leading to a sub-cellar. Igniting a candle he saw the barrel over the trap-door.

"Looks as if Dan had not been here," he mused, as he opened the trap and descended the stairs.

A shaft penetrated the heart of the house and ended in an iron-barred cell in the middle of the sub-cellar. As he reached the cell he held his light to the bars. A dim light showed him a man lying on his back on the floor. It was Dublin Dan.

Pinkertin was gone!

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDING ANOTHER CLUE

SEVERAL weeks had elapsed since Leo La Grande had been murdered, and the police had gained no information that would lead to the arrest of the guilty person. The newspapers were filled with alleged knowledge of the murderer which, when investigated, ended in a fizzle. The excitement had just begun to abate, with the finding of the murdered man's will in an envelope addressed to his niece, Adel La Grande, which will bequeathed his entire fortune of three millions of dollars to the aforesaid Adel La Grande. This envelope had been placed in the hands of the district atttorney by Ralph Pinkertin; and that personage had disappeared mysteriously, which occasioned rumors that, as he had been known to have taken up the La Grande case to ferret out, in conjunction with Tattler, he had met with foul-play. As nothing was known of the arrival of Adel La Grande in this hemisphere the surrogate advertised in France and New York for the missing

heiress to make her appearance to claim her legacy, through the medium of the legal advisors of the deceased testator, Messrs. Jow & Jummel. The result of his advertising was the appearance of an alleged Mademoiselle Adel La Grande, with testimonials and identification which, on subjection to proof, seemed so satisfactory that she was soon installed in the mansion of the murdered man, and a weekly allowance made to her from the estate which had not yet been disencumbered from its usual amount of red-tape and unsatisfied claims. Nor was there any immediate chance for such a disencumbrance, as the respected firm of Jow & Jummel drew a weekly compensation for certain untraceable *et ceteras*, which promised to last as long to the red-tape stretched.

One evening, shortly after her assumption of her legacy, this fortunate young woman received a call from her late uncle's business partner, John Howard. He was a tall, stately man of fifty, attired in deep black, and wearing a beard as gray as his hair. He was accompanied by a florid-faced man who affected a single eye-glass. This person was attired in a suit of checked cloth, with a hat of the same material, wore a blond mustache, and bushy side-whiskers after the approved English fashion. As the heiress entered the parlor the broker introduced himself and then made her acquainted with his friend, Clarence Larchmont.

Adel La Grande (or more properly Kitty Berteaux) was just the right person to fill the daring position she then occupied. Her features were refined and of a French type; and attired, as she was, in a rich brown silk dress and its accompaniments of laces, adornments and jewels, she filled the character of a well-bred girl naturally and with a charming grace that was beyond all comparison.

"I may attribute the honor of this call to some purpose, sir?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Mr. Howard smilingly; "I wanted to learn what disposal you made of the former servants, and to see if I can be of any general service to you."

"Oh, you are so considerate," she replied; "but I must decline troubling you, Mr. Howard, as I am a good manager, and have discharged such of the servants that I find no use for, and engaged others whom I need. As to the rest of my affairs, my lawyers, Jow & Jummel, attend to the legal business still pending in the court, while I personally supervise my domestic transactions."

"I merely offer my services for anything whatsoever."

"You are very kind."

"I—er—should think that it would—er—be beastly lonesome here all alone, yer know," remarked Mr. Larchmont in gasps, a smile suddenly illuminating his visage, then as suddenly dying away again.

"Oh, no, sir. I get lonesome nowhere; now hear what *I* say," replied the heiress, with an amused smile, as she winked at the Englishman in a tart fashion behind Mr. Howard's back.

"Oh, the deuce; how is that?"

"Because I always have had plenty of people about to amuse me," she replied, with a hearty "ha! ha! ha!" that seemed to be felt in her innermost soul. "Oh, I am never left in the cold."

"How strange!" gasped the Englishman aghast. "Deuced strange!"

"I beg pardon," she hastened to say, still enjoying his loss to comprehend her idiomatic conversation; "I implied that I never suffer for congeniality under any circumstances."

"Oh! Indeed!" replied the other with a sigh of relief, as he sucked the head of his silver-handled cane. "Quite likely, yer know."

Then she laughed again, and Mr. Howard set her down in his mind for a sharp, shrewd little thing, who would have preferred to fast rather than forego the pleasure of a kiss from a lover whom she was courting.

"Have you any friends or acquaintances?" he asked.

"Plenty. One soon becomes acquainted in New York," she answered laughingly. "I have a score already, and suppose they may call pretty regularly, knowing I'm installed."

"How about Fred Silvergale, Mr. La Grande's amanuensis?"

"Ah! Now, then, I've got something to tell you," she said in a cunning, childish way of confidence. "I'm literary, you know."

"Eh?"

"Inclined to romancing. Oh, I tell you I am a great schemer. I think I'll retain Mr. Silvergale's services to write for me. Writing is awfully tiresome. Would it be proper to keep him?"

"I—don't—know," replied the broker, dubiously, as he shook his head in a grave manner. "It does not look exactly nice to keep a man in his capacity. People might scandalize——"

"Oh, but I have got Mrs. Lennox yet with me."

"That alters the case somewhat."

"I am glad to hear it. I feared it might be called bad taste."

A discursive talk followed, and the two men finally quitted the house, entered a taxicab and drove off.

"What do you think of her, Larchmont—isn't she a sweet little puss?" queried the broker, as they rolled along to his domicile.

"Well," replied the other, with a laugh, as he pulled off his false mustache, "I know her—she's a fraud, and she is playing a game for some one else, or my name is not Ralph Pinkertin! Why, she is the wife of the notorious Jules Berteaux."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the startled broker.

"Yes, and they have the real heiress hidden somewhere, while this one palms herself off as the rightful girl. She has succeeded admirably so far. She is the one who helped me to escape from the cellar, as I told you, after I knocked out Dublin Dan and threw him into my cell. She hates murder, and coming down after I fell through the trap she unlocked the cell. When Dan came down I tackled him, and got into the street *via* the coal chute."

"Oh, you mean when you was pushed down that shaft and fell on that heap of trash in the pit, which saved you from death?"

"Precisely. She gave me the chance to escape."

"What occasioned her friendliness toward you?"

"Hate," replied the detective soberly.

"What! have you been playing on her anger?"

"No; I am a good reader of human nature. The girl hates her husband, Berteaux; and quite naturally, too; for, although she never did love him, she is piqued to see him show some real regard for Adel La Grande."

"How?"

"Well, Berteaux treats his wife like a dog. Much as she hates her rascally husband, who has made her the unhappy woman she is, a kind word from him, a reformation in his evil doings, and a little attention would revolutionize her and make her one of the best wives in existence. She is true-blue—loyal to the core, until abuse turns her."

"Then, in your hunt, she may yet prove a friend?"

"Probably. As Mr. La Grande's partner, I have explained all the details of this case to you. You are desirous of having the criminals brought to justice, and I am also interested in the fate of Adel. No doubt they

have by this time spirited the girl from Berteaux's house on finding Dublin Dan, which will disclose my escape from their black pit. But I shall find the girl, and once I have liberated her and placed her in a position of restoration to her rightful legacy, I shall break up this band of outlaws, and thus relieve society of a terrible pestilence."

"You can work much better now that every one imagines you are dead, for the crooks will hear of your supposed fate."

"That may be," said Ralph, making a wry face; "but the deuce of it is at present that the district attorney has opened the letter addressed to Adel by her uncle, and found the will which left the money to the heiress, and he still has the letter that Leo La Grande wrote to me which I have not yet read. That letter may be of great interest to me, and I dare not disclose the fact of my existence yet, even to the district attorney, as it surely will become known then, and I would have to abandon the chase a while. My chief object is to remain in disguise until I get possession of the girl. What did the letter addressed to you say?"

"It was merely of a business tenure, and intimated that La Grande wished to arrange our business so that he could withdraw from the firm, as he had no desire to continue longer in business."

"Is that all?"

"That was all," replied the broker. "But to resume, you did not tell me whether you were satisfied that Dublin Dan, as you called the fellow, was the burglar who robbed La Grande?"

"Dan did not do it," replied Ralph; "although I suspected and shadowed him. I was careful to examine his finger, to see if it was cut, but it did not bear a scratch. I was positive he had committed the robbery, for I know his method, as he is an old offender. You see, every burglar's work is individualized by certain peculiarities, which we detectives make a study of, in order to facilitate our location of a thief. Of one thing I am certain, and that is, that the burglar and the murderer are one and the same person. The ring—of an odd design—told me that much already."

Talking in this strain, they reached the broker's residence where Ralph stayed over that night at Mr. Howard's solicitation. Still disguised as an Englishman, the next day the detective took a taxicab down to his office to attend to his business. He employed five detectives, to whom various cases were assigned, and in these men he placed implicit confidence, as all were honorable and true as steel. Three of his men were on the trails of several criminals, and two remained at the office. As they had nothing to do then, he resolved to have Berteaux's house and that of Adel closely watched. Accordingly he detailed the men to this duty—Roe to watch Berteaux, and Doe to watch Kitty. When the officers had received all necessary instructions and departed, he entered his private office to read the mail, which a clerk had placed on his desk. There were half a dozen letters, chiefly of business import, and finishing these he opened the last, which was in a woman's chirography—in a delicate Italian hand, the heavy dashes ascending. It was a short letter, but its contents surprised him. It said:

"MR. PINKERTIN:—In the rôle of Clarence Larchmont you only exemplified your volatility at disguises imperfectly—at least to me. I know you want the girl, and you can find her at Mandeldown's 'fence.' Her release will oust me from my present luxuriousness, but you know as well as I do that I am only an unwilling tool in the hands of others who hold me in subjection, and consequently care little whether you trip them up or not. I can live anywhere. Do not fear that I shall reveal the fact of your existence to any one, as I know your lay.

"KITTY."

"By thunder!" ejaculated Ralph, gazing at the letter in astonishment. "She is the keenest woman I ever met. It is mortifying to think that while I was fondly imagining that I had deceived her, she, on the other hand, was quietly amusing herself, at the expense of my egotism, knowing all the time who I was! She is friendly though, and I shall act upon her information by calling on Mandeldown at once!" And his soliloquy brought to a close, he donned his hat and went out. It was late in the afternoon, and the sun had gone down, leaving a cool breeze blowing. Taking a downtown car, he finally arrived at Rivington street and Bowery. Walking down Rivington past Forsyth to Eldridge, he stopped on the corner before a dry-goods store. This place was Marm Mandeldown's "fence," where shop-lifters, burglars and thieves of all kinds disposed of their ill-gotten spoils. The "fence," however, was carried on under the exterior of a legitimate dry-goods business, which served as an excellent "blind" to moral humanity. The fat old "fence" stood in the doorway watching Ralph with a speculative eye. At last she seemed to have dissuaded herself of all suspicion, and called out in her most honeyed, enticing tones:

"Goot afdernoon, sir; you vand 'er py somedings?"

"Hey?" exclaimed Ralph, looking up at her in surprise.

"Some peaudivul neckdies, gollars und guffs, shendelman's socks und vine untervear. Ve geep somedings of all ginds. Yust schdep rhide in, und you see puddy soon der vinest goots in der marget, und der sheapest gind of a brice."

And, so saying, she fairly dragged the detective to the door.

Ralph pulled a roll of bills from his pocket, and this incentive so overjoyed the old Prussian woman that she yelled out:

"Jakey! Jakey! Come here vonct, und schpoke mit dis shendleman."

Her salesman rushed from behind the counter, grabbed Ralph, and between the two he was hustled into the store between their combined efforts at pushing, shoving, hauling and mauling.

Jake was a long-legged, shrewd-eyed Scandinavian of thirty, with black hair curling in knots all over his head.

"But, blast it, this ain't a jewelry-store, don't cher know?" said the breathless detective. "I want a genuine jewelry-store, my good woman."

"Don'd been mishtooken, mine friend," said Jake persuasively. "Ve soldt der generwinest shewlery in here vot you could pought anyveres by der Bowery, enerhow. I show you in der beck room. Go in mit her unt sit down."

The old fence, who imagined she had a green Englishman in tow, rushed Ralph into the back room—a small apartment with a few trunks and a table and chairs in it—and a moment later Jake came tearing in with a black box in his hand, such as drummers use for samples, which he had taken out of a safe in the wall behind the counter. In a moment he had spread before the detective a choice array of rich and expensive jewelry. It consisted of rings, watch-chains, collar and cuff buttons, studs, scarf-pins, lockets, charms, bracelets, ear-rings, brooches and an endless variety of fine jewelry.

He looked it over carelessly, the man and woman eyeing him with eager expressions.

"I say," he exclaimed, "this is not exactly the thing, don't cher know, though, by Jove, it is awful nice, deuced

nice, indeed. But I'm going to get married, and I'll need diamonds for myself and my lady, so I suppose I'll have to go to the Bowery arfter all."

The old "fence" made a rapid sign to her clerk.

"Och, Gott!" she exclaimed, "you was yust keep kerviet, unt Jakey vill show you somedings. Bud you vas not dolt anypody dot I soldt you somedings."

"Really, but I don't think you can suit me, my good woman," said the detective, making a motion as if to go. "I want diamonds, don't cher know."

"Yah, unt I soldt you tiamonds also. Heah comes Jakey righd avay quvick. I show you someding."

He reappeared with a small box, closed the door, and handed it carefully to his mistress, then returned to the store, got a huge navy revolver in his hand and hid behind a barrel watching Ralph cautiously to see that he did not steal any of the jewelry. Marm Mandeldown opened the box, took therefrom several packages of tissue-paper, which she unrolled, and a moment later a thousand flashes of brilliant fire leaped from the beautiful diamond jewelry she opened before the detective's view. Ralph picked up a handsome necklace of the gems containing twenty-five stones, and gazed sharply at the clasp. It was stamped in tiny letters: "L. La G."

The jewelry before him was that stolen from Leo La Grande, which he was looking for.

CHAPTER FIVE

A DESPERATE SITUATION

MARM MANDELDOWN eyed Ralph suspiciously, when she observed how closely he was examining the private stamp on the clasp. It was only for a moment, however, for he affected a carelessness that completely threw her off her guard. At the same time he was wondering how he could gain possession of one of the articles of jewelry as proof, when he saw an excellent chance. Several of the cuff-buttons were lying loosely on the table, and he edged his hand as close to them as possible without exciting her suspicion, at the same moment watching a huge spider that was suspended by a single thread of its web from the ceiling, nearing the back of her neck. Keeping her occupied by disputing a price she named for the necklace, he waited. A minute later the spider dropped down on her, and she uttered a scream and jumped in the air, grabbing at her neck as if a hot coal burned her. Simultaneously, Ralph snatched one of the cuff-buttons from the table, and rapidly conveyed it to his pocket, a quiet feeling of self-satisfaction thrilling him.

There was a sickening sound, as Jakey crept up behind the detective and dealt him a terrible blow on the head with the navy-revolver, and Ralph fell on the floor in a senseless heap.

"Caud 'um dat dime vonct!" exclaimed the Scandinavian.

"Oh!" cried the old woman in affright, "for vot you knock oudt his prains? You vandt to been hung?"

"He schtealed a guff-button; I seen him do id."

"You been mishdagen, ain'd id?"

"Nein. Loog py his fest-pocket."

"But you gill de man."

"No," exclaimed Jakey in affright, "he's only senzeless."

"Loog at der man—he been all vide, 'but git der guff-putton."

Jakey hurriedly closed the store-door rushed in, drew the button from Ralph's pocket and held it up triumphantly.

"Vot you gall me dot, vonct?" he demanded.

"Dot's so. He been von tief, don'd id?"

"Vell, ve god it beck."

"Bud vot ve done mit der pody?"

"I garry id upschtairs," said Jakey. "To-night ve sendt it avay in der vagon. If de bolice dey gatch me I'm a gorner, enerhow. I'll lock him up in der pedroom."

He stooped and, lifting Ralph's inanimate form in his arms with considerable exertion, he passed through a side-door, and carried him up a flight of stairs to a small, prison-like bed-room off of the hall, where he laid him on the bed.

A moment later he made the startling discovery that Ralph was alive. With shaky hands the man locked Ralph in and rushed downstairs, where he communicated the fact of Ralph being alive to his mistress.

Meantime, Ralph revived up in the bed-room, and soon recollected how he had been stricken a heavy blow. He did not know where he then was, but suspected it was in the "fence." There was no means of ascertaining, as the single-barred window was illuminated solely by a shaft-light, with four unbroken brick walls. It was clearly impossible to effect his escape by that means, for the ground was a mere inclosure, and the top was two stories farther up. He drew a bunch of skeleton keys from his pocket, and tried the door; but it resisted his effort to open it, as it was bolted on the outside; so he was obliged to abandon thinking of escaping by that means, also. He wondered why he had been attacked, feeling certain that the crooks had not penetrated his disguise, and then he felt in his pocket to see if he had been robbed.

Only the cuff-button was missing.

This fact set him thinking, and he soon suspected the reason why he had been attacked, and gave a shrewd guess as to whom his assailant was.

Then he ascertained that his false whiskers remained intact, and that his clothing was not disturbed, nor dirty save where he had fallen on the floor.

He sat down on a chair by the wall, trying to devise some means of escape, when he fancied he heard a moaning sound on the other side of the wall. Placing his ear close to the plaster, he listened intently a moment, and was soon convinced that there was a woman in that room weeping.

He tapped on the wall cautiously, and the sound ceased; then he repeated the knock, and called softly:

"Who is that?"

No answer was vouchsafed; but, with his curiosity aroused, he resolved to see who the person was, for she resumed her soft, plaintive cry after a few moments, as if in dire distress.

Sounding the wall carefully, he drew his knife from his pocket and cut a hole in the plaster. This disclosed a filling of brick; but digging assiduously at the mortar, he pulled a couple of bricks out, broke the laths farther on, and then cut through the other wall. He had thus made a large aperture, which he peered through; but the room was so shrouded in darkness that he could see nothing. The crying had stopped.

"Who is there?" suddenly queried a voice in the darkness.

"Hist! Speak lower! Is that you, Miss La Grande?"

"Ah! he knows my name! Who is it?"

"Come here by the hole I cut in the wall and I'll tell you."

A quick footstep sounded on the other side, and Ralph ignited a match and thrust it through the hole.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "As I thought. It is Adel La Grande."

"Who are you—a prisoner like myself?"

"Yes. I could get out only that my door is bolted outside."

"Nor can *I* get out. My door, too, is locked. But who are you?"

"I am the man who warned you in Castle Garden against Berteaux."

"Ah, yes! I now recognize your voice."

"For further proof that I am a friend, look through the hole."

He lit another match and held it so she could see his face, at the same time drawing off his false beard.

"'Tis indeed true," murmured the girl gladly. "I have at least one friend near in my trouble. Why are you here?"

"Looking for you," whispered Ralph.

"For me!" in surprise.

"Exactly so. I know all about your trouble. I've been shadowing you all along. Are you being ill-treated here?"

"No. But why are you watching me?"

Ralph briefly recited all that had occurred.

"Take these keys," he said, when he finished, as he passed his bunch through the aperture, "and try to unlock your door. Then glide quietly out into the hall, unfasten the bolts of my door, and I shall bring you safely out of this place."

Several minutes later Ralph heard the bolts of his door drawn back and, springing forward, he passed out into the hall where the girl stood, pale and trembling. She handed him his keys.

"My door opened very easily," she said. "But how are we to get out?"

"Hark!"

"What's the matter?"

"Here come some people upstairs!"

"Oh! See, see! Four men and a woman! We can't escape."

"Keep quiet. They have not seen us yet. Here is a door; we'll run in here until they pass. We'll have to escape by running through the store. Quick! Come with me.

Seizing her hand, he ran into a room and locked the door. A moment later and the coming people reached the hall from below.

"He vas in dot room," said the voice of Jakey, "lying on der ped, und der money vas in his bocket yet."

"Oh, we'll get ther swag, don't fret, Dutchy," said a coarse, brutal voice. "Leave ther kid to us fer dat."

"Don'd hurd 'im," said Jakey.

"If he squeals we'll fix him in short order," said another.

"They are Porter, Red Leary, Fred Silvergale, Mike Casey and Dublin Dan," whispered Ralph; "and having stopped in here to dispose of some stolen goods have been informed that I was 'laid out,' and have some money, which they intend to steal. I know their voices very well."

Evidently the injury Ralph had given Dublin Dan had not proved serious.

At this moment the thieves threw open the door of the room Ralph had occupied, and rushed in, followed by the old "fence."

At the same moment Ralph and Adel slid from the room, hurried along a passageway and quickly ascended a flight of stairs to the next floor. They heard a cry of rage when the men discovered his flight, and hurried down the hall and rushed into a room, the door of which they locked.

"He has escaped," they heard Silvergale say; "and the girl is gone, too. If they once get out we are lost!"

"Och," said the voice of the old woman savagely; "dey don'd been oudt, 'cause dey musht bass droo the schdore, ain'd it?"

"Well, then," said Porter, "they are in one of the rooms upstairs. Come on, boys, and we will get that boodle yet."

"You musht not make so mush noise, my tear frieunts," said the old "fence" in alarm. "Keep quied, or der bolice vas comt in und seddles my peesness."

"Dat's all right, ole 'oman," said Dan. "Go arn downstairs."

"Here they come!" exclaimed Ralph breathlessly, as he shoved the back of a stout chair under the door-knob for double security, and drew his revolver. "Run into that closet yonder."

The frightened girl did as he bade, and he awaited the crash.

He heard every door thrown open with a bang, right and left, as the men scampered up and down the hall in search of him, and finally they reached the room he occupied.

Then came a terrible thump as some one threw his whole weight against the panels. But locked, bolted and braced with the chair, the door would have resisted a battering-ram.

It was a room in which the old "fence" kept a considerable portion of the stolen goods she received, and was built to resist the entrance of thieves. All about were numerous boxes, cases, trunks and hundreds of packages containing a miscellaneous assortment of merchandise that was labeled in an orderly manner and dated. There were goods to be kept until a description of them was forgotten by every one as stolen property, or sold to some one out of the town or State; buyers, who paid a low figure for them, knowing what they were.

It was the woman's old custom to pay the thieves only an eighth of the value of the goods she purchased from them and sell them for half-price, many unscrupulous business men being glad to get them to dispose of over their counters many miles from the scenes of their robbery.

"They are in here!" exclaimed some one in the hall.

"Burst the door in!"

Then there came another mad rush, as they all launched themselves against the door in a body, and a bang, but the door held as firmly as a rock. Several trials convinced the burglars of the futility of trying to get in that way, and one of them discharged his pistol at the door, but the ball rebounded with a metallic clang that showed the door to be iron-clad. The men were cursing, when Marm Mandeldown came upstairs and saw what they were about.

"You don'd god in dere!" she exclaimed. "De only vay is to starve dem oudt, und puddy soon dey vill gum to derms."

"That's the talk," exclaimed Porter. "But you'll have to domicile us here, old gal, and feed us in the bargain. Now don't kick, for you know you'll get your share of the swag."

"Hello!" exclaimed one of the burglars; "I say, in there!"

But Ralph did not deign to answer. He had heard their proposition to starve him out, and fully realized how serious the situation had grown. Had it been known to them that he was Ralph Pinkertin, he felt assured that they would have procured axes, chopped in the wall, and have

torn him piece-meal, so great was their fear and hatred of him for the trouble he had frequently given them.

"Leary," said Porter, who seemed to assume command of the men, "you remain here and watch the door. Silvergale, take the end of the hall; Carey, the next landing below, and we will go to bed and relieve you in four hours. It is evident that English 'bloat' don't care to parley with us. The only way we can bring him to terms is to appeal to his stomach. He has got the gal in there with him, and the old woman has probably been making a stamp by keeping her for some one, so we must look out for Mandeldown's bird as well, and strive to restore her to her cage downstairs. Did you say this job would pay, old woman?"

"Yah; der veller haf von bockets full mit greenbecks."

"Well, boys, as we have no work or anything else to do in particular," said Porter, "we may as well stay here and see the game through. It may prove a big bonanza for us. The old woman thinks we may each get a hundred or two out of this job and, as I'm rather hard-up, I won't sneeze at it."

"We're out fer der 'dust,' too," added Red Leary.

"Well, that settles it, then. Keen your eyes open."

Ralph walked to the door, against which he pressed his ear and listened to the sound of footsteps going down the stairs.

Not a sound could be heard in the hall. The silence was suspicious. Still remaining there, he soon heard a peculiar scratching sound on the other side of the door. It puzzled him somewhat. He moved, and the sound stopped. Waiting patiently fully ten minutes, he heard the same sound again. Then it flashed over his mind that some one was tampering with the lock. He was not deceived by what he had heard Porter say. He was too shrewd to be caught napping. It was evident to him that the conversation had been carried on in loud tones and in that strain merely as a blind. They did not intend to starve him out, but merely wished to throw him off his guard while they forced the door by means of their delicate burglars' tools.

A grim smile crossed Ralph's face, and he put the muzzle of his revolver before the key-hole and pulled the trigger.

A flash, a deafening report, followed by a howl of misery, and he knew he had struck some one. This some one's footsteps could be heard staggering about the hall, and then Ralph heard him fall with a groan to the floor, while hurried footsteps approached him, and five voices asked if he had been hit.

"Yes!" exclaimed the voice of Porter; "he fixed me bad, boys. I've got a bullet into my stomach. Carry me into a bed-room."

Ralph heard them carry him away groaning.

Then he looked around the room to take his bearings, as he feared no further molestation for some time.

It was a large room with two windows no larger than the port-holes of a ship, and these were close to the ceiling and heavily barred with iron rods an inch thick.

The windows were too small to afford an avenue of escape.

He noted the heaps of goods, and wished that by force of law he had gained access to the room, as one hour's prying among that merchandise would reveal to him the secret of many and many a mysterious burglary which, for want of evidence, had baffled not only himself, but the detectives of every State in the Union. He had not time for that, however, just then. The paramount object was to escape with possession of the girl. He knew it would be rash to venture out of the door, for no doubt at least one of the burglars was guarding it.

Walking to the closet, he opened the door and saw, to his astonishment, that Adel had disappeared. The floor of the closet had also vanished. Was it a trap to engulf her?

He feared so. But a moment later he saw the floor come up, and up, until it stood before him—a dumb-waiter! This was evidently used to send goods up to the store-room from the store. The girl could scarcely have injured herself if she went down in it, and he felt troubled to know whether she had reached the bottom safely, or not. Jakey might have caught her. But, at all events, he resolved to go down in it. He saw a guard-rope, and stepping in he seized the rope, and went down easily, graduating the speed of descent with the guard.

He wondered who had sent the waiter up—the girl or some one else. He hardly had time to think, however, before it touched the bottom, and his hand was clasped by the girl. She was safe, and in a whisper told the detective how she had been borne down the shaft in the waiter, not knowing where it was going to, the moment she had set foot into the supposed closet. The cellar, like the store-room, was filled with cases of goods. From all appearances the old woman must have had many thousands of dollars' worth of merchandise in her possession. Ralph lit a dark-lantern and flashed its rays about, and they walked toward the cellar stairs.

At the same moment they heard a "click-click" close by that startled them, and a subdued chuckle that sounded elfin.

"Down, down behind the box!" Ralph whispered, "we are watched. Jakey is down here. He heard us come down in the elevator!" And setting the lantern on a box he and the girl dropped down behind one of the cases. And none too soon, for there came a "bang!" and a bullet whizzed over their heads and struck the stone foundation in back of them. Ralph seized the lantern, drew the slide over its face and slipped it into his pocket. There sounded a rush of feet up the stairs, the slam of a door, and a noise as of bolts being shot into their wickets, and they knew that the Scandinavian had escaped from the cellar and locked them in.

Several hours passed by; Ralph, standing by the dumb-waiter and watching the cellar-door in painful suspense, not knowing at what moment his enemies might appear. All this time he heard a rushing, seething noise in the front of the cellar, but paid no attention to it. The girl held up her courage most excellently, standing beside him with a feeling of security under his protection. His coolness inspired her with the utmost confidence.

Suddenly the dumb-waiter was drawn up.

"They mean to come down on it," he whispered to the girl, "but I will fix them. Here, help me pile all that paper and wood under it."

In a moment both were hard at work by the light of the bull's-eye, and soon had a tremendous pile under the dumb-waiter. They had hardly finished when they saw it coming down. The next moment Ralph ignited the pile with a match, and the flames shot up like a furnace. The woodwork about the shaft became ignited and flared up, catching the dumb-waiter. Yells of terror followed as it became enveloped in flame and smoke. In a few minutes the whole house was in flames—a roaring furnace over their heads. The dumb-waiter came falling down through the terrible heat, its inmates groaning and yelling like madmen. Ralph, too, was filled with horror, for he realized that it would be impossible for him to escape through the burning house with the girl.

CHAPTER SIX

KITTY'S VENGEANCE

THE library in Leo La Grande's mansion, at midnight. A drop-light on the center-table, Kitty and her husband—Mr. Berteaux—occupying chairs by a grate-fire, a huge bookcase in one corner, curtains at the window, and handsome furniture filling the apartment. Pinkertin's detective, Roe, was concealed in the bookcase listening.

"Marm Mandeldown and Frances," said Berteaux, "are working in partnership. The plot was this, Kitty: Frances to secure the heiress, and the rest of us to act at her bidding, with the meager prospect of a certain amount for our trouble. We to do the work for a pitiful pittance, Frances to sit quietly and securely by, watch our progress and reap the reward of three millions. It is preposterous!"

"Well, what do you propose?"

"My idea is to get the fortune myself."

"And I?"

"Oh, you and I will share it equally."

"You mean, in short, to take advantage of all Frances has done to further this scheme, and turn it to our own interests?"

"Exactly so. We have the power to do it."

"You mean," said Kitty curtly, "that *I* have that power."

"No," he replied coolly; "I said 'we' and mean it."

"You are way off on that score."

"Oh, no; you cannot play a lone-hand. I would not permit it. I would disclose the plot to the police were I exempted."

"Ah! I see. You want to cheat Frances?"

"Precisely."

"I accept your proposition. We will work together against her."

"You are a sensible girl. I knew you would," he exclaimed.

"She may prove a dangerous enemy, should we turn on her, and it would be well for us if we had a hold on her."

"In what way?"

"For example, suppose we knew who murdered La Grande?"

He started and turned pale.

"Oh, *that* is not necessary!" he exclaimed hastily.

"Do *you* know who committed the crime?" she demanded.

"No!"

"You do. I can read the lie on your face."

"We will not discuss that subject any further."

He seemed to be very nervous, and she noted his perturbation.

"Did *you* kill La Grande?" she asked suddenly.

"Me! Why, the idea! Ha, ha, ha! How ridiculous!"

"I think you did."

"You are mistaken. What makes you think so?"

"Because Pinkertin found your ring beside the corpse!"

Again he started, and his face became livid. Involuntarily he looked at the third finger of his right hand. There was a small cut on the finger, which was healing up. His quick eyes saw it.

"I'm right!" she exclaimed. "It was you who committed the robbery."

"You lie!" he retorted savagely, his black eyes lurid with guilty anger.

"That's right," she retorted tauntingly, "tell me I'm a liar. I can stand it. It is only one of the many abuses you have heaped on my head since I became your wife. But hark!" she added, with a terrible look in her eyes as she bent nearer to him; "a day of retribution will soon come, and it will then be my turn to laugh at your misery! You are a thief. I'll prove it. Pinkertin found a clue to the burglar by seeing a finger-print of blood on the window. Silvergale overheard him talking to La Grande. I received the full details, and know that you robbed this house. Admit I'm right!"

"I grant what you say to be true."

The detective in the bookcase smiled grimly on hearing this confession, and Kitty shot a side-glance in his direction full of triumph.

"Now, then," said Kitty ironically, "you admit I am *not* a liar?"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I'm satisfied on that score," she said.

"Well, what next?"

"Tell the truth; didn't you kill La Grande?"

"No! I tell you."

"Well, how was it Pinkerton found your ring beside the body?"

"I don't know. I sold the ring to La Grande some time ago."

"Before or after the burglary?"

"After the burglary."

"Well, how was it that it was found in his bed?"

"How in thunder should I know?"

"The case looks suspicious, Berteaux; now hear what I say."

The detective made a note of this part of the dialogue, resolving to interrogate Mr. Howard about the purchase and sale of the ring.

"Why are you questioning me this way?" asked Berteaux.

"I want to discover who the murderer is."

"You never will——"

"Then you acknowledge that you know who it was?"

"Blast the girl!" he hissed malevolently. "You'd better stop right where you are with your infernal questions!" he exclaimed. "I will not answer another one on that subject."

"As you please," she said, with assumed carelessness.

"Are there any listeners about here?" he demanded.

"No. I sent Silvergale and the housekeeper away. They would arouse suspicions, Frances thought."

"You are alone here?"

"Alone, excepting the servants upstairs.

"It would not be well for me to be seen here. Now, as far as a hold on Frances is concerned, don't let that trouble you. She would not care to make an enemy of me. Neither would Mandeldown. I have them both under my thumb for several pretty 'crooked' things, and unless they find that we are proving traitorous in this case we have nothing to fear from them. You see, Frances borrows heavily from the 'fence,' at an exorbitant rate of interest on the strength of really worthless securities. But as this case promises to pay a fortune Marm has in her oar with a prospect of getting her money back from Frances as soon as she gets her clutches on this money."

"Both will be badly fooled," laughed Kitty.

"Yes," chuckled Berteaux rubbing his hands together and grinning; "both will be badly fooled, my dear."

Click! click! click! click!

"Eh! what's that?" said Berteaux suddenly checking his mirth and an alarmed expression crossing his face.

"Oh, that's nothing, my dear," said Kitty sweetly.

"It sounded like the cocking of four pistols," he said nervously.

"And so it was, darling."

He gazed at her in consternation a moment.

"What does this mean—treachery?" he exclaimed wildly.

"How silly you are! Let us speak of the 'old fool,' my dear."

He shot one swift glance over his shoulder, and his gaze fell upon the barrels of two pistols behind each curtain.

"I'm trapped!" he howled.

The next instant he sprang upon his wife, his fingers closed around her throat, and he bore her back, strangling, to the floor.

"You have deceived me, but you shall pay for this. I'll choke you to death before I go under!"

Tighter and tighter his fingers grew upon her throat, and he held her down despite her most frantic struggles. Her face grew purple, her eyes bulged, and her tongue lolled from her mouth.

"Release that woman!"

His hands relaxed, and he sprang to his feet electrified.

Frances stood before him!

There was a scathing look of scorn, rage and contempt on her face.

"So!" she exclaimed, in choking tones, "this is your game? I knew you were a black-hearted traitor. Kitty, however, exposed your perfidy. She shall now have the vengeance she has so long cherished for your brutality to her."

She made a motion, and four men came from behind the curtains. They wore masks. They advanced upon the dazed wretch, and before he could offer any resistance they seized him.

"Away with him!" cried the woman. "A taxi is down at the door. Carry him to my house, lock him securely in the secret room, and prepare the valves. We will fix him."

"No! no!" shrieked Berteaux, holding back. "Do not torture me! Look—I fall on my knees to you! I never knelt to human being before!"

"Degraded!" said the woman with supreme contempt, spurning him with her slippered foot. "A worm! Arrant coward—despicable!"

She drew a vial from her pocket, poured its contents on her lace handkerchief and clapped it to Berteaux's face. One inhalation of the aromatic fluid sufficed to deprive him of his senses, and the four men with no more ado carried his limp form from the house.

Placing him in the taxicab in waiting they drove away.

In the meantime Kitty had recovered from the severe strangulation and sat in a chair talking to Frances, who stood by the table.

"Have I performed your work well enough?"

"You have, indeed, Kitty. I suspected him of treachery, and have found him out. At the same time your vengeance shall be consummated upon that brute in a manner befitting his nature. We have really done each other a service."

"But, oh, at such a sacrifice!" groaned the girl, bursting into tears.

"Fool! Why do you waste your grief on him? You do not love him?"

"No; but he was my husband, and has been for five years. I cannot help those tears. Much as he has abused me I would readily forgive him for one kind word, Frances."

"It is now too late. He has committed himself," she said harshly.

"Promise to spare him."

"Never! He has too deeply injured me."

"Then I shall go no farther in this scheme."

"You cannot retract. Besides, you will be better off if he is gone."

"How?"

"You surely have not forgotten Pinkertin? You love *that* man."

The girl started, and looked up with a half-smile.

"Ah, yes. But," she added with a sigh, "not as you suppose—not as a lover!"

"As long as Pinkertin desists from this hunt he is safe, and I have pledged you I would assist you with him. You must persuade him to give up the chase."

"He never will do so."

"In that event he may get killed."

"You dare threaten him to *me!*" she demanded, springing up with flushed cheeks and blazing eyes, her breath perceptibly shortened.

"I threaten nothing, my dear," said Frances coldly. "I say a certain thing; it is complied with. Let a refusal be made, and woe betide the one who thwarts me. My word is law supreme among the men of our crowd."

"Would you sacrifice me?" queried Kitty curiously.

"All who cross me I crush under my heel!"

"You will find I am no slave of yours."

"Prove you are anything else."

"I will."

She sprang up, threw open the door of the bookcase, and Roe stepped out and confronted the astonished woman.

"Ah!" she exclaimed in startled tones. "More treachery."

"Madame," said Roe politely, "you are my prisoner."

She burst out laughing as he advanced toward her with a pair of handcuffs in his hands, and she drew a tiny jeweled pistol from beneath the folds of her dress. Roe made a snatch for his own weapon.

Before he could lay hand on it, though, she raised her weapon and fired at the gas-fixture. The bullet pierced the globe and the gas went out.

He listened to hear her move, but not a sound reached his ears.

Cocking his revolver, he called out authoritatively:

"No not move an inch or I'll shoot."

No reply was vouchsafed.

"Kitty," he added, "light a match,"

The girl complied. By its light Roe saw that the woman had vanished.

The front door slammed at the same juncture.

"Escaped!" roared the chagrined detective.

The rumble of wheels sounded a moment later in the street.

Rushing out of the house he ran around the corner and sprang into his own cab, which he had awaiting him.

"Quick, Frank," he shouted to the negro chauffeur sitting inside half asleep. "After the cab around the corner. Don't let it escape you as you value your position."

"All right, sah," replied the negro, starting the car.

An instant later his taxi flew around the corner, and rolled down the street at a furious rate.

There was Frances' car ahead of them, and Roe pursued it over an hour; up one street, down another, doubling and redoubling on itself frequently, but always maintaining its lead. It was a long, hot chase, but Roe resolved that he would cling onto the trail until he captured his prey.

At the expiration of an hour his car overtook the other as the driver stopped, apparently in despair of escaping from his pursuer. Roe jumped to the ground, and running to the other vehicle he forbade the driver to move.

The man was cowed, and Roe sprang to the door and threw it open. It was empty!

The detective could not restrain an oath.

The woman had played a clever trick on him.

Sending the taxi off empty, in anticipation of pursuit, she had quietly slipped away on foot while the duped detective was chasing an empty cab all around the city.

To increase his chagrin the driver burst out laughing at him.

He could do nothing to the man, however, as it was a hired cab; so he hurried back to his own and, entering, drove away rapidly to the office. Pinkertin was not in.

Dismissing the cab he walked out on Broadway and thence down a dark by-street. A man ahead of him was walking rapidly down toward the East River. He recognized the man. It was Berteaux. Evidently he had escaped from his captors.

This thought made Roe feel good, for circumstances showed him that he could indulge in a vengeful smile at Frances' expense. She had fooled him, but the fact that Berteaux had frustrated such designs as she may have entertained on him afforded him considerable satisfaction.

Berteaux looked over his shoulder and recognized Roe. Instantly he started off on a dead run. His guilty conscience warned him that the detective was shadowing him. Besides, having escaped one chance of incarceration, he had no desire to fall into another. Like most criminals, he knew most of the detectives, and had an instinctive fear of them. Roe chased after him. He knew nothing of Jules Berteaux's residence, and wished to ascertain something of it from him if he could capture him. Besides, he thought, he could hold the scoundrel upon suspicion until he saw Pinkertin, and learn from his chief what imposition could be made of him upon the evidence he had gathered from the conversation he had heard between the fugitive and his wife, Kitty. On, on they ran, redoubling their speed momentarily until Berteaux reached the river, and ran out on a pier. There were a number of rowboats fastened to the spiles, and he jumped into one of them. In an instant he had loosened the painter and, picking up the oars, rowed away in the darkness. Roe jumped into another boat and rowed after him. He was guided solely by the sound of the oars the other plied. Stopping a moment, the detective lighted his pocket-lantern, and fastened it in the prow of his boat. By its light he saw the Frenchman pulling desperately toward a huge black opening in the bulkhead on shore. It was a sewer vent. A stench filled the air. Suddenly there sounded a loud report, and a bullet whized over Roe's head. The reverberation had hardly ceased when he heard the other scream out:

"Oh! my heavens! what is that?" The sound of a struggle followed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FIRE

RALPH PINKERTIN never before had been placed in such a dangerous situation as when he found himself shut in Marm Mandeldown's cellar, with the house burning over his head, cutting off the only avenue of escape to the street. Besides, he had the girl he loved under his protection, and three desperate criminals coming down the shaft through the smoke and flame. Although the girl was greatly frightened at their appalling predicament, she bore up courageously, as she had every confidence in her protector. The elevator came down the shaft with lightning-like velocity, and striking the floor it was smashed to atoms, the burning cinders flying in every direction. The three men—Dublin Dan, Red Leary and Fred Silvergale—who occupied it were thrown down with stunning force. Dan's arm and leg were broken, and he managed to crawl in between two cases, where he lay groaning dismally. The other two sprang to their feet, just as Ralph drew the girl back against the wall, and ran toward the cellar stairs. Dan heard them going.

"Help! help!" he yelled. "Wait for me! Don't yez see I'm crippled? Carry me wid yez out o' this hole!"

"The devil fly away wid him!" exclaimed Leary. "Let him stay."

"Can't we take him along?" panted Silvergale.

"Let him rip, I tell ye," said Leary. "We can't help him. He'd be in our way. We must try to save our own lives."

"That's so," replied Silvergale.

Both rushed up the stairs and gave the door a shove.

It went down with a crash, but a mass of flames met them and drove them back again, badly scorched. They fell down the stairs as if struck a heavy blow, rolling on top of each other.

Every hair was burned off their heads, and the clothing they wore was torn to shreds. The heat that filled the cellar was becoming stifling.

Arising, they groped their way to a corner and sat down.

Ralph was unnerved for a few minutes, for he saw no means of escaping. They were caged in like rats in a trap. It would be impossible for the firemen who, they knew, were hard at work outside, to get at them, as the whole interior of the store was in flames.

The shaft acted as a draught, and the devastating fire was carried up the flue, and communicated with the upper stories, which soon were wrapped in the hissing, seething flames.

They could hear the crash of falling timbers overhead, intermingled with the hiss of the water that was thrown into the building; the roaring and crackling of the fire, and the puffing of the engines in the street, faintly echoed by the distant sound of many human voices loudly shouting.

The floor above was rapidly becoming consumed, and they dreaded the moment when the fire would burst it through, which would soon end their existence, by giving the heavy timbers, the iron safes, and other things of weight, a chance to crash down upon their heads. The building was old, dry, and mostly built of lumber, which gave the fire full play.

The minutes passed like so many hours, the heat increasing and gusts of smoke curling about. Heretofore the fire and smoke had not confined itself to the cellar; but now it poured in, and filled the air with a hot, stifling stench of burning cloth. Hotter and hotter it grew down there until their clothing began smoking and their skin cracked, their mouths were dry, and their eyes bloodshot. It scorched their skin, it filled them with an insufferable thirst, and the rogues yelled and howled, and ran around, falling over obstacles in their way, clambering over boxes and bales, cursing and raging at every movement.

Ralph said nothing, nor did the girl; they suffered silently, his strong arm clasped tightly around her waist.

"Will we die here?" she asked, with pitiful simplicity.

Ralph choked back a sob that arose in his throat, and stooping over he imprinted a gentle kiss on her lips. She did not resent it; instead, she nestled closer to him.

"No," he said cheerily, "we will not die here, poor girl. The firemen will reach us soon. Have courage."

"With you—yes. I could die here, in your arms, contentedly."

"You love me, then?"

"More than you love me."

"We understand each other. I do, indeed, love you, Adel."

A sudden grinding noise, an appalling crash and an explosion over their heads roared out above the din of the conflagration, and ere its thunder ceased the floor split, and a safe—red hot—came falling down close behind them.

Ralph caught the girl in his arms, and rushed away from the intolerable heat to the front of the cellar. Showers of sparks and burning lumber fell in, and the cellar glowed with the crackling embers, illumined as if by daylight.

One of the walls of the building fell with an ominous crash. Silvergale and Leary ran after Ralph, driven away by the heat. They saw Ralph denuded of his false whiskers, and started back with howls of surprise, intensified by their agony.

"It is Pinkertin!" they yelled.

With the bad instincts in them increased at the thought that they owed their present suffering to the detective, they ran at him to kill him.

As they got in striking distance a terrible crash arrested their attention, and they paused and looked around.

A fearful shriek of terror rang through the cellar, chilling the blood in their veins. With one accord all looked toward Dublin Dan, and saw that a huge blazing log had fallen across his chest. He struggled to rise from under it, but only succeeded in gaining a kneeling posture. His clothing was in a blaze. They saw the fearful look of agony on his burnt face, and saw him tear and bite at the burning plank, in his frenzied efforts to throw it off. In vain!

"Poor devil!" said Leary compassionately. "But it's Pinkertin's fault."

"Keep back!" cried Ralph, as they ran at him again. "You will rue this."

"Down with the spy!" exclaimed Silvergale.

Ralph retreated against a door, still holding the girl. It opened inwards under his weight, and he found himself in a stone corridor under the sidewalk. There was a strong but obnoxious wind blowing upon him which, vile as it was, proved like the elixir of life, after the scorching air of the cellar. A thrill of gladness convulsed him; and the girl, too, seemed imbued with renewed vigor. Ralph drew out his dark-lantern, opened the slide, and flashed its rays about. There was a closet at one side, and at the end an open trap leading down into the main part of the sewer.

Hardly had he time to note this when the two desperadoes rushed into the corridor. They paused in delight, drinking the air that was as sweet to them as a dainty luxury.

For a moment they became delirious with joy, and forgot their intent to attack Ralph. They simply stood breathing, and paid heed to nothing else. Their abstraction gave Ralph a moment's respite, and he quickly seized the girl and sprang into the sewer. The sluggishly-flowing water was only waist-deep, and half a mile ahead he saw a light which he inferred was out on the river.

If he could make his way out he and the girl would experience no difficulty in getting up on land again. The bottom of the sewer was filled with mud and refuse, into which he sank knee-deep at every step. He kept the girl in his arms, and waded ahead with difficulty. There were bits of broken china, glass bottles and other things in the mud that cut his shoes and lacerated his legs, but he uttered no complaint. Bad as his situation was, it was preferable to the fiery furnace of the cellar.

"There he is!" suddenly shouted a voice behind him.

He flashed his lantern over his shoulder, and saw Leary and Silvergale plunging after him. He saw that they were floundering as badly as he was, and made but little headway. They went on a short while, the tenacious mud and sediment holding on their boots, and permitting them to make but very slow progress.

"They are not gaining any," replied the girl.

"Wait a moment. I suppose I'll have to dispose of the lantern, much as I regret doing so. But it is our only salvation just now. Get down in the water."

"What are you going to do?" she queried.

"Swim!" he whispered. "Just rest your hand on my shoulder, and you will not sink. We can distance them and escape in no time, walking as they are."

Doing as he bid, she floated alongside of him, while he propelled himself through the filthy water with strong, steady strokes. They made rapid headway now, and had no difficulty. Suddenly they heard labored breathing behind them, and Ralph's heart sank.

"They have discovered what we are doing, and are swimming, too."

The girl looked back apprehensively, but it was impossible to see in the Stygian darkness. A hand suddenly glided alongside of her head, and twined itself in her long tresses; she was then jerked backward, and sank in the water.

Ralph uttered an exclamation of rage, and caught her. Finding that he could stand up, he lunged out and struck Leary a heavy blow that knocked him back in the slime. Silvergale discharged a weapon at random, and a sharp cry of pain burst from Leary's lips as the bullet penetrated his arm.

"Stop firing!" he yelled. "You've hit me, Fred!"

For answer Silvergale uttered a cry, and was heard splashing in the dirty water. A moment later and Red Leary cried out, and while Ralph was wondering what the trouble was, he too uttered an exclamation of pain. Adel shrieked, and made her way toward Ralph, crying in frightened tones:

"Oh, heavens, what are these things?"

"Down, down!" shouted Ralph. "Bury your bodies under the water, or you will be eaten alive by the rats! An army of them have attacked us."

The water was alive with the ravenous rodents. They were half-starved, and in their famished condition did not hesitate to attack a human being. They swarmed from every part of the sewer, and swam in the water easily.

The four buried their heads beneath the water, leaving no more than a small portion exposed. And they were obliged to beat the rats off with their hands. Enmities in common were for a while forgotten, and each one fought against the common enemy with one accord. The beasts were made fearless by hunger.

Drawing Adel near to him, Ralph cocked his pistol, placed it on a level with the surface of the water, and discharged it.

There was a "swash" of the water, sharp squeaks, and the detective plunged ahead with the girl through the path thus made through the frightened animals that were now scampering and swimming away. As he moved on, Ralph received a severe bump on his head. Reaching upward, his hand encountered a heavy cross-beam. In a moment he drew himself upon it, and lifted the girl after

him. This was hardly accomplished before the rats regained assurance, and returned to the attack.

The two burglars were in a desperate plight, and were badly bitten, despite their almost preternatural efforts to beat off their voracious enemies. Ralph and the girl fared better, as they were free of the water.

Although the rodents dropped down upon them from the roof of the sewer-main, and ran at them from both ends of the log, they easily beat them off, and suffered but a few stinging bites. They could hear the two rogues splashing about in the water, yelling every time they were bitten.

This suddenly ceased, however, and, to Ralph's surprise, the rats attacking him suddenly scampered off.

"I wonder what's the matter?" he exclaimed in perplexity.

"Don't you smell something strange?" asked Adel.

"Ah, yes—smoke! The sewer must be full of it. Phew! I——"

A fit of coughing seized them both.

"The sewer entrance," gasped Adel, "is open, and the smoke from the fire is pouring in here."

"Doubtless. I wonder why those two devils are quiet?"

"I don't know, unless——"

Whiz! and Ralph could fairly see the glitter of the knife wielded by Red Leary as it skimmed before his face. The thief had stolen up quietly, hearing them conversing, and lunged out with such vindictive force that he missed his mark in the darkness, and stuck his knife into the plank.

The force of the blow drove the knife far into the log, and Leary lost his balance, falling upon Ralph. In a moment the detective sprang into the water, grasped his unseen assailant by the throat, and a terrific struggle ensued. At the time Silvergale crawled up, and throwing his arm around Adel's waist, he took her from the perch, and made his way off toward the sewer entrance.

"Help! Ralph! save me!" shrieked the terrified girl.

"Shut up your mouth!" growled her captor savagely. "I don't want to hurt you, but you may compel me to do so."

And placing his hand firmly over her mouth he struggled onward again with her—every step costing him an effort.

Ralph heard her cries, and his blood boiled with fury. He sprang upon his enemy with the ferocity of a tiger, and dealt him a stunning blow on the head with the butt-end of his pistol. It had no more effect upon the thick skull of the brutal cracksman than to stun him for a moment.

But this sufficed for the detective's purpose, and he launched himself in the water and swam after Silvergale, guided by the noise he made walking through the filth.

He seemed to make exceedingly rapid progress, for the light he had seen ahead was very much nearer.

Silvergale had gone ahead with good speed, for it was several minutes before the detective reached him. Unaware of the proximity of the detective, the rascally secretary forded ahead with his burden, until suddenly he was struck by something in the water that nearly deprived him of his respiration. It was the boat containing Berteaux, who was pursued by Roe. As soon as Silvergale heard the exclamation the Frenchman made he recognized him, and hastily placed Adel in the boat and sprang in. At the moment Red Leary discharged his pistol in the direction he supposed Ralph to be in, and Berteaux, imagining he was assailed by another enemy, grasped Silvergale and struggled to drown him.

"Hold on, Berteaux!" roared the struggling secretary. "Don't you know me? I am Fred Silvergale. Let me up, will you?"

"Ah!" exclaimed the other in astonishment; "is that you? How did you get in there? There, now, you are on your feet."

"Yes, I'm all right."

"What is this in the boat?"

"Adel La Grande."

"Adel La Grande?"

"Yes. Red Leary is in the water up above, and Pinkertin, the detective, is close by, if Leary has not yet killed him. We escaped from Mandeldown's house, which Pinkertin set on fire, through the sewer, chasing the detective. Doublin Dan died in Mandeldown's cellar."

"With your help, I will outwit or escape my pursuer."

"Who is pursuing you?"

"One of Pinkertin's men. I think it is Roe. There he is in that rowboat astern of us, with a lantern in the prow."

Ralph had been listening quietly, and felt a thrill of renewed hope on hearing that a friend was near to help him. It was a most fortunate circumstance for him, for Red Leary now made his appearance, and was hauled into the boat. As he did so Adel sprang from the boat into the water, close beside Ralph. She recognized him in an instant, and obeying a squeeze enjoining silence, both swam toward the approaching detective.

"The girl!" roared Berteaux; "she jumped overboard."

"Never mind her," said Silvergale hurriedly. "Roe is pretty close now, and she can't escape us, as he will soon overtake her."

"Where is Pinkertin?" queried Leary.

"Don't know," replied Silvergale dubiously. "He is pretty quiet."

"I guess dat shot fetched him," said Leary chuckling.

"Don't be too sure of that," continued Berteaux. "That fellow has as many lives as a cat. We will hear from him yet."

Ralph and the girl drifted past their boat at that moment, so closely that they could have reached over and seized them. The detective had no doubt of escaping them, but fared the light of the lantern in Roe's boat would reveal his presence to the desperadoes, and afford them an opportunity to make targets of him and the girl. There was only one course, and that a pretty desperate one, but he took it.

"Douse the glim, Roe!" he shouted. "I'm coming—it's Pinkertin—and Silvergale, Leary and Berteaux are waiting up here in a boat to shoot you!"

Roe was quick-witted, and readily understanding the situation, despite his surprise, he at once drew the slide over the face of his lantern, and the sewer became shrouded in darkness.

Scarcely a minute passed when Ralph and the girl reached the boat, and were drawn in out of the water and mud.

"No time now for explanations, Roe," said the detective cheerily. "Give me an oar. We must get out of here on the river. We are only running reckless risks remaining to fight in this beastly darkness, when we run a chance to strike a friend as quickly as an enemy."

And, wasting no words or time, the detectives turned the skiff and pulled rapidly away. Loud execrations followed them from the cracksman.

The burglars pursued, but their oarsmanship being no match for that of the detectives, our friends soon distanced them, and reached the mouth of the sewer without further accident. On the river they encountered a police-patrol-boat, containing half a dozen officers, and enlisting their services, after a recital of the facts already known, during which Ralph and Roe joined explanations

of each other's actions, they waited for the appearance of the cracksmen outside the sewer.

Not expecting the trap that was laid for them, the three desperadoes rowed out of the sewer in a short time, and were pounced upon by the policemen before they well knew what had occurred to them. The boats were returned to the place they were taken from, and then the whole party proceeded to a station-house, where the prisoners were locked up.

Decent garments were procured for Adel and the detectives, and the girl was temporarily placed in a hotel.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MR. HOWARD'S ROMANCE

TWO weeks passed, and in that interval Messrs. Jow & Jummel ground out the legal procedure of the La Grande case with the quickness of sloths. The melancholy intelligence was forwarded to John Howard that he had been made executor of his deceased partner's fortune, to be held in trust for the heiress until she came of age; or, in event of the said John Howard dying before the aforesaid Adelaide La Grande came of age, etc., etc., the said fortune was to go at once into the aforesaid Adelaide La Grande's possession, deducting all liabilities, etc., etc., under the provision that the heiress did not marry before coming of age. In which event, the heiress was to forfeit her claim to the mentioned fortune, which fortune would revert to an asylum for the maintenance of French emigrants. Mr. Howard accepted the executionship with an ill-grace. Probably it was because he was a rich man, and did not care to bother with it, as the attending commission was no object to him. He would have the estate on his hands one year exactly, as the girl was not yet of age. As a mere matter of formula (for he knew from experience that Kitty held a false, usurped position) he directed Jow & Jummel to notify the heiress of the decision of the surrogate. According to the terms of the will, the heiress was to receive ten thousand dollars a year to defray her expenses, the money to be controlled by the executor, and he to use it judiciously for the benefit of his ward. He knew how unsatisfactory this clause would be to the plotters.

There was a certain magnetic influence about the girl Kitty that attracted the old bachelor, and although he "pooh-poohed" the idea that she influenced him any, yet he could not deny the fact that he passed many pleasant evenings with her, while Jow & Jummel ground out their endless red-tape.

She was a pretty woman, small, delicate-looking and refined. She possessed an affectionate, loving disposition, a generous nature and a babyish charm that would lure any man. There was a tremendous depth to her character, though, that he soon discerned. Mostly preoccupied in thought, he saw that her mind was full of plans and plots of some kind, but could fathom nothing beyond that. One evening he entered rather hurriedly and, laying a package of letters upon the table, sat down, and in the midst of a desultory conversation the girl suddenly asked him:

"Wasn't you once in love with a woman, Mr. Howard?"

"Candidly speaking, I was," he replied in some surprise.

"Was not the lady's name Clara Haywood?"

"Why, how did you know it?" he asked, his astonishment increasing.

"My uncle wrote of it," she answered evasively, to avoid explaining that she learned the story by reading his and La Grande's letters.

"Uncle Leo wrote to my mother."

For a moment Howard was inclined to think that the girl was not what Ralph represented her to be—a usurper.

"Then," he said, after a pause, "you know of our rivalry?"

"Yes. But here—drink some more wine."

She smiled so prettily, and her tones were so sweet, he could not refrain.

He noticed that the wine he drank was not the same kind as that which he had imbibed with her a few minutes before.

The result of mixing it proved that John Howard was not an old tippler, for he soon became exceedingly loquacious; and when he awoke to a sudden knowledge of his position, he found himself winking foolish winks at the little woman. Several more drinks followed, from several bottles, and the conversation rattled on merrily. When he again had a momentary clear mental view of his position, he found himself rapturously kissing Kitty's, tiny hand, hinting that he loved a certain person looking very much like her. Then more wine flowed, and Mr. Howard sang a song, which seemed to have a theme: "We'll pass the flowing glass," or something to the same effect, in a boisterous manner. His hilarity again aroused him to a stupid sense of his situation, but this time he only grinned and, smacking his lips, winked at the light in a reckless fashion, for he found his arm encircling Kitty's waist, and his nose close to her cheek. Several more glasses made him see two everythings. He endeavored to dance a jig, smashing his hat down over his left ear, and fell on the flat of his back, imagining a brick wall struck him. Then he split his trousers up the leg, and jammed his head in a coal-scuttle. When he arose, after some difficulty, he swore by all the gods of mythology that he was sober, and to verify his words walked a chalk-line so straight that his elbow was poked through a plate-glass picture-frame two yards to the right of the line. Apparently edified by the success of this maneuver, he attempted to laugh, burst all his suspender buttons off with the effort, and then laid down on the floor with an apology for feeling inclined to take a short nap. When he awakened next morning, he found himself in his own house, and wondered how he got there.

His brain was too foggy to remember that Kitty had put him in a cab and sent him home. He had not been gone from the house long when she hurried back to the parlor, and grasping the package of letters he left on the table she opened several, read them, and replaced them in their respective envelopes with a satisfied look on her face. A rich crimson glow suffused her cheeks as she took another package of letters from Leo La Grande's writing-desk, and placed them with those the broker had forgotten to take, and making a neat package of them she prepared them for mailing, superscribing the wrapper with the direction of

RALPH PINKERTIN, ESQ.,
No. —8 Broadway,
New York.

All of the letters were finger-worn at the edges, and yellow with age; and both bundles were, strange to say, tied with bits of ribbon. The chirography of a number in each bundle was by the same person, and Mr. Howard's bundle contained some in Leo La Grande's writing, while La Grande's bundle contained some in Howard's hand. Kitty mailed them the next morning, and returned home only to find Mr. Howard awaiting her with a swollen head and watery eyes. He was very nervous, for he was passing up and down the parlor with restless strides, and

the muscles of his face were twitching spasmodically. He appeared to be somewhat embarrassed when she entered and saluted him, and after the first formal civilities passed, he blurted out:

"Did I leave a package of letters here last night?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, with a mischievous smile that made him blush.

"Thank heavens. Will you give them to me?" he asked eagerly.

"I cannot. Don't you remember what you did with them? Ah! Mr. Howard, I tried to persuade you, but you would persist in drinking too much wine, and I am afraid you became tipsy."

"What in the world did I do with those letters?" he asked in frightened tones. "I would not lose them for all the money I am worth. They are of the utmost importance to me. Do not keep me in suspense, my dear madam, for I am in a fever of anxiety about them."

Kitty led him to the open grate, and pointed at the charred and blackened remains of some letters she had burned there.

"There are your letters?" she cried. "I tried to stop you, fearing they might be important, but you became ugly, and insisted upon burning them to ashes, just as you see them. I am very sorry, indeed."

A great sigh of relief broke from him.

"Ah!" he cried. "I burned them, did I? Well, well. It makes no difference. I do not remember doing it, though."

"And no wonder you don't," she replied, shaking her finger at him. "You was awfully intoxicated, and acted real foolish."

"You must pardon my indiscretion."

"Certainly; but don't let it occur again," she said.

Both laughed, and chatting a few minutes, he took his leave, and went to his place of business with a light heart. He wondered what had become of Ralph, as he had not seen the detective in two weeks, nor had he heard anything from him. He had taken a deep interest in Ralph's reports of progress to him, and wondered why the detective had so mysteriously disappeared, leaving no word of what he was up to. But this was merely a stroke of diplomacy on Ralph's part.

The shrewd fellow was merely keeping up the deception of his supposed death. Roe told him all that occurred, and Ralph was puzzled at what Berteaux said. The detective's conclusion was that the burglar and murderer were the same person, but Roe's intelligence broke this theory, and Ralph knew he would have to look further for the murderer. It was possible that Berteaux was aware who the murderer was, but he had strong reasons for keeping quiet on the subject, as he naturally would have no desire to become implicated in so serious a charge.

With Red Leary, Fred Silvergale and Berteaux in the station-house, Ralph felt easier-minded, for these men were, and could yet be, a source of a good deal of trouble to him.

Warrants had been issued for them, and after private examinations they were remanded to jail for trial. Ralph had called on them for the purpose of eliciting some information; but they became severely taciturn whenever he approached them, and told him flatly that they would say nothing. No visitors, save the warden and Ralph, were permitted to see them, although the chief jailer was daily beset by numberless newspaper reporters in quest of information. Having his men caged, the detective began wondering what had become of Casey and Porter, but could gain no definite information. They had gone to Brooklyn, was the most he could ascertain. The house of Mother Mandeldown had been gutted by the fire, but was soon repaired, and her crooked business flourished under the management of her sons. Both she and Jakey disappeared temporarily, and Doe reported the closing-up of Berteaux's gambling house.

Kitty still retained her false position as a counterfeit heiress; but it was evident to Ralph that the whole party engaged in the conspiracy had become frightened on seeing that their keen-scented enemy meant to make it hot for them, and had discreetly drawn to cover until they could arrange their plans more satisfactorily.

At this stage Ralph received the letters Kitty had mailed him, and carried the package into his private office.

All the letters were yellow with age; the ink had turned to a rust color, and they presented a general aged appearance. The girl had written nothing to indicate from whence they came, but he recognized her handwriting, and wondered why she sent him. A perusal of them, however, made him think considerably. The general tenor of the letters were of a gushing character peculiarly characteristic of lovers.

They were addressed to Clara Haywood, and were written by both Leo La Grande and John Howard, who appeared to have been rival suitors for the girl's heart and hand. La Grande had been the favored suitor, and the other showed some jealousy, although expressing the utmost love for La Grande, with whom he had been associated many years in social and business life. He read all the letters until he had but few left from each of the men, and then a sad story was revealed, which had been developing throughout the whole batch. The following letters will explain themselves; the first one he read being from Howard:

"DEAR CLARA: Your last letter received and read with the utmost sorrow. I am disappointed in Leo. He is not the manly, good-hearted fellow I always imagined he was. He has an evil temper, and coarse views of the delicacy governing all decency. And yet you reject my love to accept his! He is no fit mate for you—he is too brutal by nature, and his love for you—if, indeed, he can feel such a sentiment at all—will not last. Let me entreat you not to marry him; if you ignore my warning, you will live to repent a terribly false step. His wealth will avail you nothing, save the luxurious living and the fine dresses you crave. In time he will neglect you—perhaps tire of you, and ultimately he may utterly cast you off. Think again; my love for you is pure—his worthless, and you will be happier as a poor man's wife than a rich man's slave. I will work hard for you, and in time you will bless the day you consented to do as I would wish you to.

"Devotedly yours,

"JOHN."

The next one, from La Grande to the girl:

"MY LITTLE PET: Your request to accept my offer is absurd, and I will not take it. You once consented to become my wife, and it now remains for you to abide by your word. Refuse, and you will not only make me a miserable man, but you will deprive yourself of all the luxuries wealth can procure. I shall expect to see you at the church to-night as a sign of your compliance.

"Your true love,

"LEO LA GRANDE."

The following, from the girl to Mr. Howard:

"MR. HOWARD: I have accepted Mr. La Grande for better, for worse. I love him and shall go to him. Let this note end all further correspondence between us.

"CLARA HAYWOOD."

The dates of the following letters showed an interval of a year. The following diary extracts had evidently been torn from a book, and were inclosed in an envelope directed to Mr. Howard:

"JANUARY 10TH, 1866.

"A dull, gloomy day, and heaven knows it well accords with my present frame of mind. Oh, had I only heeded the warning of my good friend John, how happy I might now be! But alas! how blind is love, and how alluring is gold for the poor! Here I am, after only one year—one year! the first half all honeyed rapture—the second half, quarrels and ill-treatment! Then he struck me. Oh! I shall never forget it. Even worse it was when he threw me from his door—when he sent me out into the world a beggar. He cursed me. Yes, and now divorce! For what? Nothing. His brutality was unbearable, and in my desperation I told him I loved John. That was enough. But I will not curse him as he cursed me. No! I still love him. But his ending will be equally as direful as mine! I know it! I feel it!, I will destroy my life. My heart is broken. The river flows near by, and I can at least find peace beneath its troubled waters."

"JANUARY 30TH.

"Let me see? I was going to commit suicide! Ha! ha! ha! How foolish! But then, perhaps any young wife as illy treated as I was might have thought of the same thing! Now—well, I can do better. I will live to see a dreadful vengeance consummated on the wretch who caused my trouble! That's all. Never mind how. I have met a man and woman—the woman's life is much the same as mine was. But in a broil of excitement she lives—forgets—endures. Now, then, away with all care until I fall before the scythe of the dark angel of time, an atom in the dust-heap of all that was once beautiful and happy, but is now decayed. I will assume the name of my benefactor—'Francis Berteaux'—and under this sobriquet no one will ever recognize Clara Haywood."

The next Ralph perused was a personal cut from one of the daily papers and pasted on a blank sheet of paper:

"BERTEAUX: Your address unknown, or would write. The wrong shall not go unpunished. I shall avenge it if years are necessary. JOHN."

Two letters yet remained. One was the last letter La Grande ever wrote to his partner, which Ralph found on the desk in the morning the murder was discovered. It was brief, and worded as follows:

"DEAR JOHN: Settle our accounts. I wish to withdraw from the firm and leave New York soon as my niece arrives from France. You may never see me again. Let old joys and sorrows be buried; I know Clara still preys on your mind. Never mind. Attribute it to my bad temper. I grew to hate her in time. My attorneys, Jow & Jummel, will arrange my business. Yours, etc.,

"LEO LA GRANDE."

The last letter was in a lady's hand, and looked like Clara Haywood's writing:

"MR. HOWARD: The bearer, M. Berteaux, will deliver you a ring from my friend, Clara Haywood, who recently died at my house. She attached great importance to the ring, saying you—her only true friend—gave it to her as a token of friendship. This tri-foliated ring, of a diamond, ruby and sapphire, is perhaps a true indication of sincere regard—at least she always thought so.

"Respectfully,

"MRS. BLANK."

Ralph started on reading this. It was a good description of the ring he had found beside the corpse of La Grande! What new mystery was this developing! The ring had been worn by the burglar who had entered La Grande's house, and he now knew that the burglar was none other than the Berteaux mentioned in the letter. Ralph was mystified. Picking up Mr. Howard's letters, he glanced at them casually. Each one was sealed with a drop of sealing-wax on the back, and there was a stamp impression in the wax of a three-leaved clover. Quickly drawing the ring from his pocket, he fitted it into the impression in the wax, and found that the fit was perfect. There was no doubt in his mind that the impressions had been made with this same ring. This gave rise to several extraordinary suspicions in his mind. It was clear in the detective's mind that La Grande had wronged his wife, Clara Haywood, whom John Harris had loved. Now was it not possible that the injured woman had at last sought a terrible vengeance upon the man who had blasted her life? Her letters contained slightly threatening language. On the other hand, it was very probable that John Howard, knowing La Grande was going away from New York—perhaps forever—still harboring the thought of avenging the woman he loved once, had taken the opportunity before La Grande had gone, and kept his vow by murdering his partner.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION.

THE detective theorized on the clues he had found, and as the startling conviction forced itself upon his mind that John Howard was really the murderer, he swore out a warrant for the man's arrest. Going to the hotel, he met Adel.

"I want you to come with me," he told her. "I am going to expose a woman who has assumed your identity and has swindled you out of a fortune which was left by your uncle, Leo La Grande. He was murdered by the gang who cheated and robbed you. I know who his murderer is, and intend to expose the counterfeit heiress, put you in her place, and bring your uncle's murderer to justice. This plot was the reason for all your recent misfortunes."

Adel was startled and nervous about going with him, but he told her the whole story, and they finally started for the La Grande house. As they were ushered into the parlor they heard the voices of Kitty, Frances and Mr. Howard talking excitedly in the back-room. The portieres were drawn, but every word they said was distinctly audible, and they heard Mr. Howard say:

"How strange that I should find you in this house when I called to give La Grande's niece her check, Clara! After disappearing for years, have you come back to lay claim to your dead husband's estate?"

In reply, the voice of Frances Berteaux: "I do not want La Grande's money. This girl inherits it. I called to see her on a matter of business, and, to my amazement, found you here."

"Clara," said Howard, "now that La Grande is dead, why don't you marry me? I will leave the city with you, and we will forget the miserable past."

"No, no!" gasped the woman, recoiling from him.

"Once more—will you come with me?" demanded Mr. Howard firmly.

"I cannot. You know not what and whom I am, and have been."

"That makes no difference. I still love you, Clara Haywood."

"Hark! Did you ever hear of Berteaux's gambling-hell?"

He shuddered involuntarily.

"I am Frances Berteaux!"

He reeled back as if shot, gazing at her incredulously.

"It is a lie!" he shouted.

"No!" exclaimed the woman bitterly. "It is as true as there is a heaven above us. Leave me. Let me go my way. I would be a shame to you—a blemish upon your pure name. Cast off by my husband, Leo La Grande, whom I loved, I became a partner of Jules Berteaux in his gambling-house. Am I not low enough?"

"Hold!" he cried in tones of terrible significance. "You are at last justified before God and man. I knew of your overwhelming trouble, for I loved you, and swore to avenge you. I have done so. With this hand I killed Leo La Grande—the man who accomplished all your trouble!"

There was a cry from Kitty, who started up, and in an instant Ralph Pinkertin swept the portieres aside, rushed in, and his hand fell heavily upon John Howard's shoulder, while his clear voice thundered out:

"John Howard, you are my prisoner. I arrest you, in the name of the law, on the charge of murdering Leo La Grande."

Had a bomb burst in the midst of the three, no more consternation could have prevailed.

Ralph was as much surprised as the rest, but his rapid discernment comprehended all the details of the case in a flash.

All he had read in the letters had returned to his mind with damning and overwhelming proof of the guilt of Howard. And not until then did he know he had been pursuing the wrong scent.

Howard was the first to recover his composure.

His face grew white, but he betrayed no other emotion.

"Unhand me!" he exclaimed harshly. "I deny your accusation."

"You just convicted yourself. I heard your confession."

"A man can say anything. What proof have you?"

"I have the tri-foliated ring set with a diamond, ruby and sapphire, which you dropped beside the corpse when you committed the deed!"

Mr. Howard started violently—then became defiant again.

"What ring do you refer to?" he demanded. "I know of no such ring!"

"Oh, yes, you do," said Ralph coolly. "The same ring you used as a seal on the letters you sent to this woman when she was known as Clara Haywood! The same ring Jules Berteaux returned to you from Frances Berteaux, but not, however, before he wore it on his finger on the night he burglarized Mr. La Grande's house! You see, I have all the facts. Just recall to your mind seeing a tiny speck of gold dug from the band of the ring, if you can, and I will show you the same speck of gold which I found adhering to the window through which Berteaux made his entrance, cutting the third finger of his right hand while doing so."

Mr. Howard became dizzy, and leaned against the wall.

"Do you deny it?" demanded Ralph.

Howard remained silent a moment, pondering deeply.

"No; I confess all," he said presently.

"You will make a clean breast of the whole thing?"

"I will, sir," he answered. Then, turning to Frances: "Clara," he said gravely, "it was done for you. I have avenged your injury and sacrificed myself for you. The gibbet looms up darkly before me. Poor girl! I did what I thought right, and my conscience is now at ease. It is all over. Go your way, and while you live, it will be with the knowledge that John Howard sacrificed his life and soul for your honor, as he vowed he would do. Farewell!"

A wild cry burst from the woman's white lips.

"You shall not leave me thus!" she cried. "I love you, John!"

"I'm sorry," replied Howard, with a faint, sad smile; "it must be."

"Not while I live! He shall not take you!"

"I beg to differ with you, madam!" said Ralph smilingly.

"That man will never die in the chair."

"He shall."

"We shall see! He has been too noble. While I breathe he shall not want for a friend to help him.

Ralph grasped his prisoner by the collar.

"You come along with me, Howard!" he exclaimed.

"Stand still," countermanded the woman imperiously.

"If you resist, I shall use force," threatened Ralph.

Frances Berteaux drew a pearl-handled, single-chambered pistol, and a tiny vial from her pocket. She raised the weapon, and taking deliberate aim at Ralph's head, pulled the trigger. It was a hair-trigger, and acted immediately.

But the moment she touched it, Kitty knocked her hand aside.

With a single groan, and a crash, as he fell to the floor, Mr. Howard lay prostrate.

A fearful shriek burst from the woman's lips.

"Oh, I have killed him!"

"Yes—you have cheated the chair!" said the detective dryly.

"I will die beside the man who died for me."

"Not if I can help it. Your pistol is empty!"

"I still have here a vial of deadly poison, which I will swallow. Watch me."

She raised the vial to her lips and emptied it.

Her glassy eyes were fixed upon Pinkertin reproachfully.

Only one minute elapsed, and she fell upon the floor, motionless.

Ralph approached her still form cautiously, and looked at her.

She was, indeed, quite dead.

Ralph viewed his surroundings with no comment.

He felt a soft touch on his arm and, looking down, saw Kitty standing beside him.

"I am so glad you are uninjured," she said.

"I am worth ten dead men yet," he replied cheerfully; "and I owe it to you, my girl. You shall not find me ungrateful."

"Do you wish to make a slight return for the favor?" she asked.

"With pleasure. Anything I am capable of."

Her face flushed rosy-red.

"Kiss me!" she said.

"Why, of course I will," returned the detective gallantly, although he was very much surprised at the strange request, and he complied resoundingly.

"Is it possible, Ralph," she asked him, "that you have not recognized me yet? I am your cousin—Kitty Lockwood!"

It was a deep surprise for the officer.

"Thunder!" he exclaimed. "I now understand why you befriended me. How strange I did not recognize you! But tell me, how became you the wife of so perfidious a villain as Jules Berteaux? I never knew you was married."

"I married him five years ago, against the wishes of my parents, who distrusted him. Heaven knows I reaped the reward of my folly soon enough."

"And this gang of your husband's made a tool of you in their scheme?"

"Yes; a mere matter of self-convenience. I could not refuse—my life was in danger."

"Anyhow," said Ralph, "they have come to a bad ending. To-morrow I shall make my report at headquarters. A wagon from the morgue will remove these bodies. Just wave my handkerchief outside the street-door, where it can be seen. It's a signal."

"For your men?"

"Yes. I have a posse of police near by."

She took his handkerchief and went out with it.

In a moment she came running back again, her face white, and her limbs trembling. Before she could say a word of explanation, there sounded a heavy footfall, a volley of blasphemy, and a loud, hoarse voice in the hall.

"It is Jules Berteaux!" gasped Kitty.

"Hist! On your life make no noise. He is coming in."

"Hello, there, Kitty, where in thunder are you?" shouted Berteaux.

He kicked open the door and entered. The next moment he uttered a yell, and let the girl drop to the floor, as he saw the scene before him.

Ralph blew a shrill blast upon a whistle, and footsteps sounded in the outer hall. Berteaux was gazing down the muzzle of Ralph's revolver.

"Trapped!" he exclaimed.

"By me! Hold up your hands!"

The detective did not approach near enough to lay hands upon him, however, when he kicked the revolver from Ralph's hand.

But the detective seized him; there was a violent struggle, and Berteaux was handcuffed, and as several policemen rushed in the crook became despondent.

"It's all off," he growled. "I'm finished, and will turn state's evidence, Pinkertin. I want to confess."

"What have you to say?"

"John Howard murdered La Grande, and I robbed him."

"Why did Tattler aid you?" asked Ralph.

"He was a son of Kate Madigan—La Grande's housekeeper—who was known as Mrs. Lennox. Silvergale was his step-brother. All were in the plot."

"Had Kate or Silvergale any connection with the burglary or the murder? Had you anything to do with the murder?"

"Kate told me the valuables were in the house. John Howard made arrangements with Kate, Fred and myself to let him attack the old man. He paid us well to keep his secret."

"I want you to give me some more information."

"Give me a drink, then."

Ralph handed him a flask.

"How about Tattler?" he queried, when Berteaux had his drink.

"He and his mother, Mrs. Lennox, kept Frances and the rest of us posted about your movements. So did Mr. Howard, for you told him all you accomplished as you proceeded."

"I was, then, fighting against greater odds than I imagined."

"I am surprised at your wonderful success thus far," said Berteaux.

"Perseverance," said Ralph, "overcomes many obstacles."

"That's so. Why, there is Kitty!"

The girl approached.

"I have deeply wronged you, poor girl," he exclaimed, "and now bitterly regret it."

"Say nothing about the past," she replied gently. "I freely forgive you, Jules."

"It is more clemency than I deserve!"

Ralph called his men, and they locked Berteaux up.

In a moment thereafter Adel was clasped in Ralph's arms.

"Adel!"

"Oh, Ralph!"

That was all they could say for a moment.

Then all our friends were driven away.

Jules Berteaux, Fred Silvergale, Kate Madigan and Mike Casey were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment with the rest of the gang.

Marm Mandeldown and Jakey reappeared when the storm had blown over and, being unmolested, resumed the "fence" business. The gambling-palace of Berteaux was closed, and Mr. Howard and Clara decently buried.

The fortune Mr. Howard left went to the city's coffers, as he had no heirs. It was not long before Ralph succeeded in establishing Adel's claim, and she was duly installed into her rightful position. And when she was of age, Ralph married her.

SPECIAL NOTICE

Please give your newsdealer a standing order for your semi-monthly copy of "MYSTERY MAGAZINE." The War Industries Board has asked all publishers to save waste. Newsdealers must, therefore, be informed if you intend to get a copy of this magazine every two weeks, so they will know how many copies to order from us.

A STRANGE TRIBE

IN one of the Arabian deserts a new tribe of nomads has been recently discovered. They are descended from the Rechabites mentioned in the thirty-fifth chapter of the book of Jeremiah. Their chief gives the following explanation of their lives:

"The part of the country where we pitch our tents is not altogether a desert. There are fertile pastures for our sheep, where we principally live. We number about 2,500 families, and there is a tradition among us that the prophet Jeremiah himself led us to the district we now inhabit. Almost all our men have five or six wives."

This chieftain added that the sheath of his sword came to him from a Babylonian exile, and that he personally had just undertaken a journey of fifty-three nights. He wanted to see foreign lands so as to find out whether it was better for his tribe to live some new place than in their own district. When asked how it was that nothing had ever been heard of the tribe, he said no stranger could ever penetrate into their land, as he could not stand the burning sun. There was very little water, and both the people and their herds often had to do without it for several days.

THE ORPHANS

BY AN ENGLISH DETECTIVE

ENTERING Worship Street from Shoreditch, nearly opposite the Eastern Counties Terminus, in London, there is a yard or court about a hundred yards onward on the left-hand side. I think it was called Bell and Dragon Court, but of this I am not quite sure. On the right of the court were stables; on the left, three small cottages, having green shutters and green doors, and a tiny brass knocker to each door.

In the parlor window of No. 1 was a neatly written paper, fitted nicely to one of the panes, which announced that mangling was done there, also plain work. The same advertisement was, by the landlord's kindness, posted on the corner public house, with this addition: "At Mrs. Mason's, No. 1, around the corner."

My acquaintance with the singularly interesting family dwelling at "No. 1, around the corner," commenced in quite an accidental way. I was returning home by coach from Enfield when, passing Shoreditch Church, I caught sight of the very man I wanted. To stop the coach and spring off the roof was the work of less than a minute; yet, quick as I was, Jabez Martin was quicker, and before my feet touched the ground had doubled the distance between us and was speeding away at a tremendous pace. I followed, shouting: "Stop, thief! Stop thief!" Several persons essayed to stop him, and though fiercely thrust aside their efforts greatly impeded his progress. I was coming up with him hand over hand when he ran full tilt against a girl as she turned out of Worship Street into Shoreditch, knocking her down with great violence. The force of the concussion staggered Martin and before he could recover he was my prisoner. Two officers came up and, handing over Martin to their custody, I attended to the girl. A woman had raised her from the pavement and was holding her up by sheer strength. The girl was stunned and there was blood upon her face. I bore her into a pastry cook's shop hard by and ran off for Michael Richards, apothecary, then living about twenty doors away. We were soon back again, and I was pleased by his assurance that the girl had sustained no serious injury. The blood was from her nose, and while the simple restoratives necessary in such a case were being administered I had an opportunity of closely observing her. Her years could scarcely be more than seventeen, and a more engaging face I have seldom seen. Her figure, though slight, was elegance itself. In spite of a poor, washed-out cotton frock, coarse and patched shoes, and the rough abrasion caused by sedulous needlework upon the forefinger of her left hand, I felt, when she opened her soft eyes and a faint smile lit up her countenance, that "a gem of purest ray serene" was before me. The sweet eyes were nevertheless swollen with weeping, and an air of inexpressibly mournful sadness clouded the natural sunshine of her face.

Mr. Richards knew her, and asked in a kindly tone if her mother was better.

A burst of tears was the reply, followed by a timid explanation to the effect that she was on her way to his house when knocked down. It was necessary he should see her mother without delay. She was worse—much worse.

Richards said he would go at once. The girl, Frances Mason, led the way; and I, at a gesture from the apothecary, whom I knew very well, followed. Richards, as we walked along, intimated in his brief, curt way that my police officer experience might be needed by the Mason family. A fire had broken out in their dwelling in the dead of night, and in the endeavor to save her daughters Mrs. Mason had been so terribly burned that not the slightest hope was entertained of her recovery.

"A fellow lodged with the Masons," said Richards, "for whom at first sight I felt an instinctive dislike. He is a working jeweler and his name is Mark Lopes. I think it quite likely that you may have known him professionally."

"He is a Hungarian?"

"An unmistakable one. Dark, gross eyes, flashy suit, chain, pin and rings complete. His age may be about thirty."

"I know a fellow of about that age, whose name is Lopes, or Lopez. He limps slightly, and has a scar on his left cheek."

"The very man! Hush! Here we are!"

I followed Richards into the abode of desolation, soon to be that of death. The tenement had been gutted by the fire. Every article of furniture had been destroyed and Mrs. Mason was dying upon a mattress.

On the floor by their mother's side knelt her daughters, Frances and Rosamond, and close by them a minister of the Baptist persuasion. He was praying with closed eyes and upraised hands in a measured, monotonous tone, which strangely contrasted with the daughters' sobs and broken cries.

Unspeakable anxiety was expressed by the dying woman's face. Not anxiety for herself; for the sepulchral tolling tones of the parson were not heeded by the mother, whose fluttering spirit was looking its last through swiftly darkening eyes upon her children.

Her lips moved as she caught sight of Mr. Richards, and a feeble uplifting of her fingers, which were playing with the coverlet, was sufficient sign that she wished to speak with him. He stepped gently toward her and bent down his head. The tones were too feeble. He could not distinctly hear a word, and he said to me in a quick whisper:

"I am a little deaf. Will you, Mr. Waters, act for me?"

Of course I readily complied. The white lips moved again and I heard the words: "Lopes—gold—watch."

This was all I could make out; and the meaning was obscure enough. Still, seeing that Mrs. Mason was going fast, I pressed her hand in token that she was comprehended. The response was a faint, pale smile, which, as her gaze turned again upon her children, brightened into transient sunlight, fading swiftly into the cold, calm pallor of death.

I turned to leave, for my presence there, if not intrusive, could be of no service, and as I did so caught a glimpse of Mark Lopes, who, with the charred, partly-opened door in his hand, was gazing with unquiet eyes upon the scene within. A start of surprise showed that he had also recognized me, and the bushy-haired head and dingy-saffron face vanished in a twinkling. I was downstairs nearly as

soon as he, and was up with him before he could open the street door. His perspiring hand I noticed slipped around instead of turning the latch-knob.

"I wish to speak with you, Mark Lopes."

"With me—me! What about? What for?"

"Well, I want information about the origin of the fire here two nights ago; and as I know you have had much experience in fires, I shall be glad of any hint you may be able to give me upon the case."

"What do you mean by that?" exclaimed Lopes, with a sort of indecisive fierceness. "Do you dare insinuate—that—that——"

"Dare insinuate what? Out with it, Lopes. What is it that a man of your clear conscience could imagine I meant to insinuate?"

He did not answer, and turned savagely away. I was not, however, disposed to part with him; and as we were by then close to the Bell and Dragon, I said, in a half-civil, half-menacing tone:

"Come, come, Mr. Lopes, I must and will know all about this fire. You were a lodger in the house and, I have no doubt, up and doing as soon, if not sooner, than any other inmate. We will just step in here and over a friendly glass you will tell me all about it."

The fellow hesitated, but, having mentally reckoned up the risks and advantages of telling his own story or of peremptorily refusing to do so, accepted my invitation.

My knowledge of Mark Lopes was but slight and incidental. He had carried on business in Bermondsey, and twice a fire broke out in his premises, consuming his amply-insured stock in trade. The first time he was paid the amount claimed without demur. On the second occasion a rigid investigation took place, which led to the apprehension of Lopes upon a charge of arson. The evidence proved technically insufficient to establish his guilt, and he brought an action against the *Sun* office, which resulted in a verdict for the defendants. I had since lost sight of him.

The particulars I contrived to elicit from Mark Lopes relative to the Mason family and the catastrophe that had befallen them were mainly these: Mrs. Mason was before marriage a Miss Curzon, the daughter of a gentleman by birth and position, but of scanty means, who died insolvent. About a year after his death Frances Curzon married Mason, then a jeweler and silversmith in prosperous business at the West End of London. For about twelve years after the union Mason continued to prosper, or appeared to do so. Then disasters came upon him and he ultimately broke down, not in business only, but in character sank lower in the gulf of poverty and self-abasement, till he died in utterly desperate circumstances, and by his own hand.

Lopes had worked for him, and knew that his family —his sister especially, who had married extremely well herself—never forgave her brother for marrying a "pretty pauper." Whether Mrs. Mason, after her husband's death, had applied to her rich sister-in-law for help, he (Lopes) did not know—or, if he ever had known, had forgotten that lady's name. If she had applied, help was refused, and the widow and her daughters had no means left of independent life but the poorly-paid labor of their own hands. Mrs. Mason finally hid herself and children, so to speak, from those with whom she had associated in better days, in the cheap obscurity of Bell and Dragon Court. The fire had broken out between one and two in the morning—how caused no one could make out. The two girls had been really in no danger, as they slept in the front room on the ground floor, and could easily at the first alarm have got out of the window into the court. In fact, they had done so, when Mrs. Mason, who slept in the front room up-stairs, awakened by the furious knocking at the street door and the shouts of people in the court, rushed in frenzied terror down the flaming stairs in her nightdress to the rescue, as she supposed, of her children.

"The poor lady was delirious till she died," added Mark Lopes, "and talked terrible nonsense."

"You occupied the back room on the upper floor, and were, I suppose, in bed and asleep when the fire broke out?"

"No; I was kept awake by the toothache, and at the first alarm hurried on my clothes, rushed down-stairs, and thundered at the girls' door. They quickly awoke, hurried on their things, opened the door, and I helped them through the window."

"Why not out by the street door?"

"Because the passage was in flames, and their thin dresses would have been ablaze in a moment. The fire burst out in the back room on the ground floor."

"The girls were in safety, then, when the mother reached their sleeping-room?"

"Yes; and I was just going to follow through the window when Mrs. Mason rushed in all afire."

"Is your own loss considerable?"

"No; not at all so. It has been low water with me for a long time. The Masons have lost all, as nothing was insured; not much in amount," added Lopes; "in fact, nothing to speak of—nothing of any value."

"I should suppose so; a family circumstanced as they were could have nothing of much value in their possession. Well, I am obliged to you for your information, scanty as it is."

This I said in a tone and manner intended to persuade him that any vague suspicion which his antecedents might have suggested had been dismissed from my mind; and I was pleased to observe that I succeeded in conveying that impression.

The Worship Street Police Office was not far off. I ordered an additional glass of brandy-and-water to be taken to the gentleman in the parlor, and I was pretty confident that I should be able to set some one unknown to him upon his track.

I was to a certain extent disappointed. The only men I would have trusted were known to Lopes, and I hoped to engage the services of a young man living in Chiswell Street, whose familiar cognomen was "Humpy Jim." He was a sharp-witted hunchback who at that period sometimes attended the weekly horse and second-hand carriage sales at the repository in Barbican. In traversing Finsbury Square, I found him in hot dispute with a much bigger youngster than himself for the privileges and profits of sweeping a crossing there. Humpy Jim—his real name was James Cotterell—was evidently out of luck just then, and as the business in hand required to be done upon economical principles, it struck me that he was just my man. His age was not more than nineteen at most. He jumped at my proposal—comprehended what was required with wonderful readiness. We got back to the Bell and Dragon before the last tumbler of grog had been imbibed by Lopes, and I went my way with the full conviction that I should be informed of all the man's doings, and many of his sayings too, up to such time as the sleuth-hound I had placed upon the scent should be called off.

It may be asked what, except the unintelligible words gasped forth by the dying mother, could induce me to suspect Mark Lopes of felony in the case of the Mason family. Well, the motive for my conduct is to be found in the inconsequent conversation between me and Lopes already given

By that I knew that he was awake and busy when the fire at No. 1 Bell and Dragon Court broke out. That he did not attempt to rouse Mrs. Mason, who slept in the next room to his, but that he was zealous to aid the exit through the window of the daughters. That Mrs. Mason, "rushing all afire" into her children's chamber, found him there. What had she found him doing there? Then his eagerness to assure me that she had been delirious since the fire, had "talked terrible nonsense," and that there was nothing of any value in the house. All that, viewed in conjunction with his furtive looks and changing color as we talked together, suggested to the practised eye of a detective-officer matter of grave suspicion. Moreover, the daughters interested me greatly. Rosamond, the younger, was not unlike one of my own girls.

Mr. Richards, the apothecary, a man of large and active benevolence, provided for the immediate physical needs of Frances and Rosamond Mason; and a true Sister of Mercy—one of that noble sisterhood with whom London abounds—exerted herself to procure the orphans a means of independent support. No. 1 Bell and Dragon Court was plainly furnished anew, and better-paid-for work was obtained for them. Time only could bring balm to their hurt minds.

I, meanwhile, was not idle in my vocation. Upon questioning the daughters, I found that their mother had a considerable quantity of valuables—heirlooms that had belonged to her father, which were kept in a stout box, locked up in a cupboard in the front ground-floor room, their sleeping apartment. The box had been consumed in the fire, and the contents, old silver plate and a massive gold watch, had, they supposed, been stolen during the confusion, as no trace of gold or silver could be found in the ashes and crumpled rubbish.

Amidst the great privations, their mother had refused to part with those mementoes of a happy life, except upon one occasion of sore need, when she pawned the watch for five pounds. Frances, the elder daughter, had been sent to redeem it on the day when the right to do so would have expired; but she could give no description of the watch, except that it was a large, heavy one. Upon application to the pawnbroker, that deficiency was supplied. Mr. Morris, of Norton Folgate, had entered the name of the maker in his books—that of Jurgeson, a celebrated name—no doubt as a memorandum for his own guidance in the event of the watch being sold by auction, as the law, in such cases, requires. I had now a pretty distinct notion of what the dying lady meant by "Mark Lopes—gold—watch."

Humpy Jim, supplied with funds by Richards, clung to the Hungarian like his shadow. All in vain, however, for a long time, was that careless vigilance. Lopes neither pawned nor sold silver plate or a gold watch, and was exceedingly kind and respectful to the Misses Mason; brought them work, and paid for it liberally.

He himself was getting into remarkably good form: wore fine clothes, frequented theaters and expensive taverns, without visible means for indulgence in such luxuries. Cotterell informed me that one morning Lopes received a letter, which he eagerly opened at the door, took a slip of paper from it, immediately stopped a taxicab which happened to be passing, and was driven off so rapidly that he, Cotterell, could not possibly keep the cab in sight. Cotterell suggested that the slip of paper must have been a check, which Lopes had hastened to get cashed. I thought so, too; and when, after about a week's absence, I returned from Scotland, where I had been ungaged on a case, the lad informed me that Lopes had received another letter, had shortly afterwards came out of the house in which he lodged, and called a taxi, and ordered the driver to take him to Hoare & Co., Fleet street.

I called at Hoare's, and was informed that a banker's order for one hundred pounds, being the second for that amount drawn in favor of Mark Lopes by a Bath banking-house, had been paid two days previously to the person that presented and indorsed it. At my request the manager said he would write to Bath, and ask the name of the person that had obtained the order from the bank. The answer received was, "Mrs. Barfield, a lady of fortune, residing in the vicinity of Bath, who keeps an account with us."

Who was Mrs. Barfield, and how the deuce came it that a lady of fortune should send drafts for two hundred pounds to Mark Lopes? It utterly confounded me, till Mr. Richards suggested that Mrs. Barfield might be the wonderfully well-married sister-in-law of Mrs. Mason, whose name or residence Lopes professed to be ignorant of, but with whom, nevertheless, he had perhaps contrived to open a correspondence, pretendedly on behalf of the bereaved, desolate orphans.

This was a shrewd guess at all events, and Richards undertook to write to Mrs. Barfield.

I had left Mr. Richards' shop, when it occurred to me that there was a very easy way of ascertaining whether Mrs. Barfield was the Misses Masons' aunt, by simply asking that question of the young ladies themselves. I accordingly turned up at Worship street, and into Bell and Dragon Court, but was stopped before I reached No. 1 by young Cotterell.

"Lopes is in there," said the hunchback, who was much excited. "Lopes is in there with Miss Frances. Miss Rosamond has been sent out with work."

"Well, what of that?"

"I don't know exactly what of that," replied Cotterell, fiercely; "but if I heard the least, slightest scream in the world I would know," continued the lad, opening and closing his fists in a manner unconsciously, and as if preparing to clutch and grapple with some hated thing. "I can guess what he's after; I ain't a fool. This is the fourth time he has been here and sent Miss Rosamond away upon some pretense or other; but I'd be down upon him like a breeze. I could throttle him," added Cotterell, with a savage snap of his teeth, "I could throttle him as easy as I could a sparrow!"

I was amazed at the lad's vehemence; at the bitter rage revealed by his burning eyes, and pale, death-pale face. A few questions sufficed to discover the source of his emotion. He had taken messages to the sisters from Mr. Richards, had been kindly noticed by them, and had become affected, or infected, by the beauty and sweetness of the elder to an extraordinary degree. And I could not help thinking, as I looked upon his sinewy though stunted form, his stout arms and hardened hands, that he might prove at need a better champion of Miss Frances than many a big man.

"Go in," he went on to say; "go in quietly yourself at once. He has been there more than half an hour. Here," added the hunchback, with some hesitation, "here is a latchkey which fits the door. I could not rest," the excited lad continued in reply to my stare of surprise, "I could not rest till I had it. How without it could I get in if I wanted to?"

I availed myself of the key, entered the house quietly, and listened to the conversation going on in the back room between Lopes and Frances Mason. Conversation it could hardly be called, her share therein being confined to ejaculations of surprise and alarm in reply to the man's ardent solicitation that she would become his wife. The fellow was positively proposing marriage to the distressed and

astonished girl, though her mother was scarcely cold in her grave! I soon, moreover, comprehended that remembrance of the kindnesses which he had thrust upon the sisters greatly mitigated the manifestation of terror and disgust which the proposition excited. Completely mistaking the cause of the girl's tremulous civility, Lopes waxed bolder, and seemed about to offer her some personal indignity, when I suddenly entered the room. He seemed to literally collapse with surprise and consternation, whilst a slight scream of joy, followed by a burst of hysterical tears, interpreted the feelings with which Frances Mason greeted my appearance.

I thought it unwise to let it appear that I had been listening outside, and after a few words of apology for my unannounced intrusion, I said abruptly, having first so placed myself that I could see Lopes' face in the tiny chimney-glass:

"Is a Mrs. Barfield, who lives near Bath, an aunt of yours, Miss Mason?"

The question was an electric shock to Lopes, and his livid face turned rapidly from me to Frances Mason, from her to me, his wild, flaming glance betokening as he did so, intensest alarm and astonishment.

"I have never heard of a Mrs. Barfield," said Frances Mason. "Our aunt's name is Dalton, and she lives at Brighton."

"The Mrs. Barfield I am speaking of," said I, turning sharply upon Lopes, "is the lady who has lately sent you two drafts, amounting to two hundred pounds, upon Hoare, the banker."

The fellow blanched visibly, but Frances Mason's reply to my question had so far restored his self-possession that he surlily retorted with:

"What the devil right have you to ask who sends me checks?"

"Well, no precise right at present. But come, let us depart."

Lopes sullenly acquiesced, and we left the house together. Cotterell was in the court, seemingly intent upon the grooming of a horse. Lopes did not notice him; but a sly, swift, round-the-corner squint shot at me showed that Cotterell saw us, and that his eyes were quite sufficiently wide open to see the latch-key, which I managed to drop unobserved by Mr. Lopes.

I invited the Hungarian to take a glass at the Bell and Dragon; he complied, but was so sullenly incommunicative that I soon left him. It was then about four o'clock, and the winter evening was already closing in.

Five hours afterwards, just upon the stroke of nine, and whilst I was at supper, a note was brought me by an officer attached to the Worship Street Police Office. I copy it verbatim:

"Sir—I ave kild Lopes; lest wais I hope so. Piched him clene over stares. Upon is cussed hed. All rite with Miss Frances. Jist in time. Hoping to see you and quite happy, James Cotterell."

The officer's report, supplemented by subsequent inquiry, gave the following particulars of what had occurred since I left Bell and Dragon Court:

Mark Lopes, warned by the discovery of his correspondence with Mrs. Barfield, determined, at any hazard, to make Frances Mason his wife. With that view, he at about half-past six in the evening returned to No. 1, Bell and Dragon Court, and sent Rosamond Mason away under pretense that a lady in Gracechurch street for whom they worked wished to see her immediately. Frances was in the back room up-stairs, and did not know that her sister had left the house, or that Lopes had returned, till he presented himself before her. A vehement altercation ensued, and finally Lopes, drunk with excitement and liquor, had seized the terrified, helpless girl, and partially stifled her frenzied screams, when Cotterell burst into the room.

"The strength of twenty men was in me," said the hunchback, with proud, glistening eyes. "The strength of twenty men was in me. I seized the scoundrel by the throat, dragged, whirled him out of the room, and pitched him as easy as a skittle-ball over the staircase. I glory in it. Miss Frances is an angel still, and I don't care what comes of me."

Mark Lopes, though frightfully injured, recovered after about six weeks' medical discipline in St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and was then transferred to Newgate. The next session he was indicted for stealing from No. 1, Bell and Dragon Court, a quantity of silver plate and a gold watch. Also with obtaining, nominally from Mrs. Barfield, but really from Mrs. Dalton, who was ill at the time, and staying at the former lady's house, two hundred pounds, under the pretext that he was the legal guardian of Mrs. Dalton's nieces, and that he was anxious, in fulfillment of their mother's last wishes, to discharge various debts that had been incurred during her long illness, as well as to befittingly equip the Misses Mason for appearing at their aunt's mansion at Brighton. He was convicted upon both charges, and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation.

Frances and Rosamond Mason were adopted by their wealthy childless aunt; and both, I have heard, have married happily.

"One Night in a Gambling House," by Sandy McNabb, will be published in No. 33, out March 15th. Don't miss it. The story is fine.

COCOANUT PALM THE JAVANESE STAFF OF LIFE

THE all-around usefulness of the palm, often spoken of, is nowhere better instanced than in the Dutch East Indies. To begin with, cocoanut oil is the chief resource in the way of edible fat for the millions of natives, and this is a matter of nterest to us, as one of the food prob'ems before the world is a proper source of fats.

Every part of the tree can be put to good use. Even the roots have a reputation as a medicine.

The hard, horny wood is used for native huts or cheap buildings. The sweet sap can be made into sugar.

The gigantic leaves are utilized for making baskets or other articles which are intended to last only for a short time, the stiff ribs of the leaves are made into brooms, and the freshly-sprouted and as yet undeveloped leaves make a delicious vegetable. The most important product is, however, the fruit. While still totally unripe or half-ripe the nuts play a great part in native medical science. The milk is taken by the natives as a cure for intestinal troubles, and many medicines have, according to them, to be prepared with cocoanut milk in order to assure a maximum of curing power. The husk is used for the manufacture of cord. The hard shell is made into cups and other receptacles. It is, moreover, an excellent calorific and is, therefore, used as fuel. The meat of the fresh nut is an excellent food and forms an important part of many European and native dishes. When kneaded with water the grated flesh produces an emulsion which is used as a substitute for milk with many native dishes.

TRACKING A BIGAMIST

BY FRANK VAN TRENK

"HELLO, Ed, here's a notice of marriage in high life," said a police captain, glancing over the morning paper.

The person addressed was a man about thirty-five years of age, dressed in a suit of sober gray. Rather tall, with an easy, careless air about him; a mild hazel eye, and a perfectly passionless face.

One to see him would not take him for a detective, yet he was by far the shrewdest man on the entire force. His name was Edward K. Smith, and at that time New York knew no shrewder man or one better calculated to ferret out crime than he.

"Who is it?" asked the detective quite carelessly, without looking up from his memorandum book.

"The bridegroom is Mr. Walter C. Simpson, the bride Miss Josie Crawford."

"Walter C. Simpson? I know him. He is a rather fast young fellow who lives expensively uptown."

"Probably," the police captain replied. "I know nothing about him."

"What does the paper state of the bride?" asked Smith.

"Nothing, save that she is beautiful and worth a half million."

"Good strike for Walter."

"Very."

Both again relapsed into silence; the captain to delving into the newspaper, the detective to comparing notes in his note-book.

Several minutes passed without anything to disturb the two officers.

There came a knock at the door. It was a light, timid knock, as though the person who rapped almost feared to enter.

The captain arose and opened the door. Before him stood a woman with a pale, care-worn face—a face which had once been beautiful, but sorrow had filled it with care and wrinkles; a face yet young, and the hair, still retaining evidences of golden beauty, was streaked with gray.

Traces of beauty could yet be seen in the faded face. The mild blue eyes were soft and tender, yet filled with sorrow and care.

The detective started up and, returning his note-book to his pocket, looked once into that pale, sad face. That one glance convinced him of the cause of her sorrow.

Before him he beheld a heart-broken woman. He read her as plain as if she had been an open book. But one cause of all others could fade the cheek and turn that golden hair gray. She had probably been deceived and disappointed in her affections.

"Is this the office of the chief of police?" she asked.

"It is, madam," answered the officer in question.

"Is he in?" was her next question.

"No, ma'am, but he deputized me to act in his place while he was gone. If there is any official business upon which you wish to see him I can perhaps attend to it equally as well as he."

The lady—for lady she certainly was—glanced timidly about the apartment, and Smith, construing her glance to mean that the interview was to be private, arose and left the room. Entering his own private office, he sat down at his desk and resumed his contemplation of the notes in his memorandum-book.

In the meanwhile the newcomer was relating to the police officer her own sad story. It was full of woe, indeed, though in reality the same old story so often told, so sad and so true.

It was a story of love, marriage and desertion. From what she told and the police officer gathered and surmised it was about as follows:

She was from the rural district, and her name had been Sarah Font. She was the belle of the village, the pride of her parents, and loved and admired by all who knew her. Of lovers she had scores, but never gave in until she met Richard Knowles. Mr. Knowles was from the city, and dressed so elegantly, talked so beautifully, and had such an urbane air about him that he was at once the admiration of all the girls in the village, and envy of all the young men.

He wore a silk hat, a beautiful mustache, and always dressed in the best of style. His language was superb, and the young girls of the village all declared him "killing."

In short, he won the heart of the beautiful Sarah Ford. When he asked her hand in marriage she could not refuse, and though her parents desired her to wait until she knew him better, she consented to a secret wedding.

The knot was lawfully tied, as she supposed, and she was the wife of the man she had loved so passionately. Her parents forgave her and she and her husband—her dear Richard—came to the village to dwell with her father until he could purchase a suitable site for a magnificent residence.

It was the intention of Knowles to astonish the oldest inhabitants of the village with his wealth and power in the construction of a residence worth at least half a million dollars.

Poor little Sarah's head was turned by the reputed wealth of her husband. She believed his stories. How could a young wife believe a husband false?

A few short weeks of brief honeymoon passed. Then came the sad awakening. The wife was deserted, just at the time she needed most a husband's care and love. Weeks passed into months, and he did not return. She received letters from various places, which was evidence that he was drifting about. At last letters failed altogether.

A rumor was circulated that she was a deserted wife. Her child was born, but died when but a few hours old. She arose from a sick-bed, a sad wreck of her former self. Her beauty had failed and hair grown gray, and her once girl friends avoided her.

When sufficiently recovered she determined to set out and find the man who had so cruelly wronged her, and make him repair the injury. She left home in the night

and had traveled about from place to place, tracing her faithless husband at last to the city of New York.

Here she had come and invoked the aid of the police in helping to find him.

The police officer listened to her sad story with patience, and at last said:

"I sympathize with you very much, madam, and will do all in my power to aid you. But such crooks usually cover up their tracks so well that it is hard to get at them. The marriage is probably void."

"I have heard it hinted that it was," she replied. "We were married in a hotel which stands directly on the line between two States. They say we were married in the State requiring license, and had none."

"In such a case the marriage would be void and he could not be convicted of bigamy should he have married before or since."

The woman placed a handkerchief to her eyes and wept bitterly. Her trials were indeed severe. At last she said:

"I do not care to convict him, bad as he is. If I cannot win his love and retain it I want him to make reparation for the great wrong I have suffered at his hands."

The police officer reflected a moment and then said:

"One of the most difficult things will be to find out where this Richard Knowles is."

"He must be in the city," replied Mrs. Knowles.

"He might as well be in the heart of an African wilderness, for all the good such information may do you. You will need the services of an expert detective in ferreting him out. The gentleman who was here when you came in is a detective of no little experience. If you desire him to assist you I will call him."

The lady expressing such a desire, the police officer went to the door of Smith and rapped upon it for him. The door opened and Smith came out.

Beckoning him into the office, the policeman introduced him to Mrs. Knowles and he heard her story. Care was taken that the affair should not get into the daily papers and thus give the criminal a scare and time to make his escape.

In company with Mrs. Knowles, both disguised, sometimes as men and sometimes as women, they traveled about the city, visiting various places of amusement where they would be most likely to find the fast young man of society, as the truant husband doubtless was.

Every effort failed. For three weeks they went from house to house and discovered no trace of the traitor.

Sarah Knowles was almost on the verge of despair. The detective, however, was by no means despondent. He had a clue to work upon and, ascertaining from Sarah the place of her marriage, he left the city for a few days, telling her to remain at her hotel until he returned.

After a week's absence he returned.

"It is all right now," said Smith. "I think I know where the man is."

"In this city?" asked Sarah.

"Yes, and besides, he is wealthy, and has married again."

Sarah clasped her hands over her heart, as though she felt a severe pain there. She had started to her feet, and staggered as if she had received a severe blow. Had not Smith caught her and supported her for a moment she would have fallen to the floor.

After a few moments she was sufficiently recovered to stand, and the detective rang the bell. When the servant appeared he ordered a glass of wine, and after Sarah had sipped about one-fourth of it she expressed herself as feeling better.

"It was a sudden attack," she said. "It is gone now and I shall be well in a few moments. You will not see me affected so again."

"When you are strong enough we will go to him," said the detective.

"I am thoroughly recovered now and fully able to meet him," she muttered resolutely.

"Do not overestimate your strength. The trial may be greater than you anticipate."

"I know just what it will be," she said, "and I am fully prepared to meet him. You will see no more weakness on my part."

"Then, if you desire it, we will go at once," the detective suggested.

She nodded and the detective went down and ordered a carriage.

They got in and were driven away. Straight to the residence of the newly-married man, John H. Simpson, the carriage was driven. When in front of it the driver halted.

"Your husband lives in that house," said the detective, pointing to the Simpson residence. "You had better go in and see him alone. I will be near enough to aid you if necessary."

All trembling with excitement and emotion, which could not be put down, Mrs. Knowles descended from the carriage and started forward to the door of the house.

At this moment the door opened and a gentleman, tall, handsome and richly attired, came out upon the street.

It required only one glance for her to recognize him.

The detective watched her from the carriage, and was gratified at the manner with which she bore up under the encounter. They met upon the pavement face to face.

"Richard Knowles," she said, leaning against a lamp-post for support.

"Who are you?" he demanded, somewhat gruffly, but his face reddened and his hands shook.

"Have you forgotten me already?" she said, lifting her veil, showing the face of the woman he had once professed to love.

Simpson started back with an oath.

"You here?" he stammered, aghast.

"Yes, Richard Knowles, or John Simpson, or whatever your name is. I am your wife, and wherever the husband is, there the wife should be also."

"I am not your husband," he replied, almost savagely.

"Why not?"

"Our marriage was illegal. We were married in a State requiring a license, without any license. You are not my legal wife, and shall not ruin my happiness now."

As he spoke he raised his slender cane to strike her.

"She is your wife," hissed a voice in his ear, and the next moment Smith had him by the throat. "You were married in the State not requiring license. I have investigated it all. Now you are my prisoner."

"Bigamy."

The news was broken gently to Josie Simpson, and she, after the first wild paroxysm of grief over, sent for Sarah.

"You were more wronged than I," she said, "and everything here is yours. I have no rights now."

Sarah divided the property with Josie, and they both live in the same house, loving each other as only two true women in misfortune can, while their husband, the cause of so much woe, is serving out a ten years' term at Sing Sing.

An exciting story, entitled "Caught Without Money," will be published in the next number. Read it if you want to enjoy an extra good story.

MARSE CHET'S DUEL

BY GEORGE F. LYON

AT the close of a long day's ride I found myself, late in the afternoon, making my way slowly along a dreary bit of country road in South Carolina. I urged my tired horse on, eager to find some place of shelter from the night and rapidly approaching storm, both of which were almost upon me. So deeply was I engrossed in considering whether to turn about and go back or not that I had not noticed that my horse had left the turnpike upon which we had been traveling, and was now slowly picking his way along a narrow grass-grown path. Through the treetops I could see a roof and several chimneys. As I drew nearer I obtained a better view of the place, which was apparently deserted and fast going to decay. A number of large, overgrown trees hung low over the roof, which was green with moss and fallen leaves. Loose clapboards rattled and clattered in the wind, and a broken window shutter flapped dismally to and fro. The windows, too, were broken out in many places and gone, and the wide steps of the veranda were rotten and unsafe. A path or driveway leading down to the road was full of tall grass and stones, with nothing to mark its course save a law, scraggy hedge, overgrown and thriving in its neglect. Sloping gradually down to the road, the lawn was also thickly grown with tall, rank weeds and bushes, and the whole place showed an air of neglect and ruin.

Dismounting from my horse, I led him to the stable in the rear, and went up the steps of the veranda to the front door.

Just as I was about to go in I heard a step on the gravel path and, turning, saw an old negro standing at the corner of the house regarding me with curious eyes. He lifted his old, battered hat, and with a feeble bow said, in a remarkably distinct accent:

"Howdy do, sah?""

I could not help smiling a little at the sight of his tall, bent figure, covered with an old army blue coat, soiled and torn, reaching down nearly to his heels. He had on a pair of gray cotton pants, with huge patches of some darker material sewed conspicuously on each knee, while his feet were thrust into a pair of old shoes which had evidently seen their better days long before.

The sound of his voice somewhat startled me, for I supposed the place to be entirely deserted, but, concealing both my surprise and amusement, I quickly returned his greeting, and said:

"Hello, Uncle! I saw that we were going to have a storm and thought perhaps I might find shelter here for the night."

He hobbled slowly up the steps of the veranda to where I stood, and looked me carefully over from the tip of my shoes to the top of my hat, then drew forth an old iron key and slowly proceeded to unlock the door.

He swung it back, creaking and groaning on rusty hinges, and motioning me to follow him, went in. A damp, musty smell greeted us and I glanced about the hall. Great patches of plaster hung in masses from the wall and ceiling, through which the bare laths could be seen. Broken pieces of furniture were scattered about and the floor creaked woefully as we walked along the hall and entered a long room opening to the left.

This apartment, too, had the same appearance of age and neglect as the hall through which we had just passed.

"Who owns this old place, Uncle," I asked.

He looked at me a moment as if surprised at my question, then, taking his pipe slowly from his lips, he said in a voice feeble with age, yet clear and distinct, with little or none of the broken dialect of the Southern negro which I had hitherto been accustomed to hearing:

"Don't you know this place, sah?"

I shook my head, and he went on:

"I reckoned that everybody knew this place. I take it that you are a stranger in these parts?"

"Yes," I replied. "I never was in this part of the country before until to-night."

He nodded his head in reply to this, and then continued: "Well, this place use to belong to the old Colonel. You have heard tell of old Colonel Darrel?"

"No," I interrupted. "Who was the old Colonel?"

"Why, he was my old master way back before the war, and he owned this place and another down the river. But after young Marse Chet fought that duel with a young French fellow that come up from Savannah old Marse he shut this old house up. Nobody ever came near it again, 'cause the people round these parts know all about the old house, say that it is haunted, and that every Christmas night the ghosts of young Marse Darrel and that young French fellow that he fought the duel with come, and all the others that was here that night it happened."

I now began to get a little interested and, thinking perhaps it might help pass away a dreary hour, I asked the old man to tell me about the old house. At first he did not seem inclined to say much about it, but after a few questions and a silver dollar he told me the story.

It was many years ago that it all happened, before the war, it seems, and young Chester Darrel, the only son of old Colonel Darrel, had just returned from college in the North. The days that followed his return home were full of life and excitement. The young man was naturally a gay, reckless sort of chap, and whenever he was at home or abroad he was constantly surrounded by a company of young men as wild as himself.

The Colonel was a stern, gruff old man, who cared neither for gaiety nor pleasure, and he looked on with disapproval while Chester and his boon companions were carousing and riding about the country.

Their nights were generally spent in drinking, and the morning light often found them lingering over the cards. The guests, and sometimes even the host, were carried bodily by one of the servants to their rooms, insensible with wine. For some time the old Colonel looked on calmly, thinking that after Chester had sowed his wild oats he might settle down and become a dutiful son. But the gay company came and went and there was a constant round of boisterous festivities. For over a year things at the old place went on this way. When young Darrel was not at home he was rioting and having a good time somewhere else with his father's money. It was all in vain that the Colonel at first reasoned with his son. It was also in vain when his good old mother pleaded and

wept for him to reform. And equally in vain it was when the old Colonel, unable to any longer control himself, raved and swore that there should be a stop put to these scandalous proceedings. But Chester only listened patiently while his father talked, and when he was gone he laughed over it, and things still went on in the same old way as before.

At length the Colonel and his wife decided that they would go away—leave the old place to Chester and his associates, and perhaps some time after they were gone he would miss father and mother and reform. So one day the old family servant drove them to the other place that was owned by the Colonel.

The servants soon began to be more in fear of the young master than they were of the old one, and, instead of having the desired effect that the old folks had hoped for, things grew rapidly from bad to worse. The whole neighborhood for miles stood aghast at the stories whispered about the doings at the old place. Night after night were spent in gambling and drinking and the days in carousing.

Christmas night came; the old folks had been gone over a month now, and there came up from Savannah a gay company of young sports. Among them was a young French fellow, Claud Gaston—a gay, reckless sort of a young chap, fond of cards and wine. After nightfall the gay company gathered in the long dining-room, and, wine and cards being produced, the festivities began.

Chester Darrel and the young French fellow from Savannah were seated at a table playing faro together. Darrel was a good player, but young Gaston was a better one, and soon his superior skill in handling the cards began to tell against his companion. Gaston, calm and collected, played coolly, while Darrel seemed flushed and excited. His hand was unsteady from the effects of the wine he had been drinking, and his eyes gleamed as he raised the bet already on between them to his last dollar.

He lost! It was only a natural ending against as adept a player as his guest was; but, not believing in his own inferiority, Darrel cursed his luck and, draining another glass of wine, insisted upon another game, with Gaston to name the stakes. Darrel was without a dollar to put up, and he would not borrow. Already his watch, horse and jewels were gone.

Suddenly Gaston leaned over the table and whispered a few words in the ear of his host.

"You are engaged," he hissed, "to Miss Olive Arnold. Is it true?"

Young Darrel started a trifle at this, and then bowed his head in reply.

"Well," continued the tempter, "to make the game an object I will put up all I have won from you and five hundred dollars in addition if you will put up your claim to the hand of Miss Olive. If I win, you are to yield all claim whatever you may have upon her. If you win, all you have lost is yours, with five hundred dollars besides. Will you do it?"

For a moment young Darrel's cheeks flushed with anger and offense, but the fever and passion for play was upon him and, bowing his head, he muttered:

"I agree. Go ahead."

Gaston chose the jack of clubs, while Darrel staked his all on the queen of hearts, and watched with feverish intensity each turn of the cards. The jack won, with the queen following the next turn, almost a winner for young Darrel.

"It was not a fair deal!" he cried in his disappointment and despair. "You cheated, and I know it!"

"It was a straight game from the first," Gaston insisted, and he smiled exultantly into the face of his host.

"You lie!" was all Darrel could gasp in his rage, but scarcely had he uttered the words when Gaston seized his half-filled glass and dashed its contents full in the face of his host.

Some of the cooler-headed ones among them sprang forward between them. For a moment they stood glaring at each other, their eyes flashing and cheeks aflame with rage. Both, naturally hot-headed, insisted upon having immediate satisfaction. That meant a duel. The choice of weapons, of course, belonged to young Gaston, and without a moment's consideration he chose pistols. Then somebody, as a half-drunken joke, suggested that they fight in the dark, each man having one shot and equally as good a chance as the other. The idea was acted upon and the long dining-room was chosen. The window shutters were closed and securely fastened, and the young men, each having braced himself for the ordeal with a stiff drink of brandy, took their places, one at each end of the long room. The door was closed and locked upon them. The signal agreed upon to begin the hunt for the other was the popping of a champagne cork in the hall outside by the other guests. The bottle was opened and, with a loud report, the cork flew to the ceiling. While the guests were drinking, each man inside was straining every nerve and sense of hearing to locate his opponent. For several moments all was still within the dining-room. Then the stealthy steps of one of them could be heard creeping softly about. There came the fall of a chair as one of them had stumbled against it with uncertain, staggering step. It was followed by the hurried rush of feet. A loud report told the eager listeners that one of the men had taken his chance. They gathered about the door, listening with straining ears for the second report. Each moment seemed an hour to the now almost sober listeners. Ten minutes passed and, as the silence at last inside became almost unbearable, one of them called through the keyhole:

"Go on; what are you waiting for?"

There was no answer, and after a moment's impatience at the delay some one suggested that a light be produced. They unlocked the door and, holding the lamp high over their heads, they slowly and cautiously entered. A death-like stillness prevailed; the guests peered nervously and anxiously about the room. And there among the shadows at the end of the long dining-room table, outstretched on the floor in a pool of blood, with a bullet hole in his side, lay the form of Claud Gaston. Grasped tightly in his hand was his pistol, still undischarged, but he was alone. Expecting each moment to see the form of young Darrel, huddled behind some article of furniture, the guests began to look about. Their host had disappeared completely.

The body of the young French fellow was carried upstairs by the servants, and together the guests made a systematic search of the whole house from attic to cellar, and all through the grounds, but it was all in vain. Not even the slightest clue of the missing man was found. The shutters of the dining-room were undisturbed, and not a footprint was on the soft gravel outside the windows. Chester Darrel had as completely disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him.

Next day all the guests left the old place in the hands of the servants.

The Colonel never cared to return to the old home, and in the spring his wife passed away. The old man, alone now and broken-hearted at the strange, untimely end of his son, lived but a short time after the death of his wife. The war broke out soon after, and one by one the slaves stole away and the old place was left deserted. Stories were told about the surrounding country that the house was haunted by the ghosts of Chester Darrel and the young French fellow. Every Christmas night, it was

said, they came at midnight and fought over again the duel in the long dining-room, and the people about seemed to believe the stories.

Here he old darky finished his story and, shaking his gray head, sat smoking away in silence. I looked at my watch and was surprised to find that it was after midnight. Thinking I might catch a few hours' sleep before morning, I got up and lit a pile of broken furniture piled upon the hearth. A bright, cheerful blaze leaped up the huge mouth of the old chimney and filled the low raftered room with smoke. It poured out in clouds, nearly suffocating my companion and myself. The fault seemed with the chimney, which would not draw, thus causing the smoke to issue into the room; and thinking something must be obstructing the draught, I took the cane which the old negro had used in walking and thrust it vigorously up the flue. It was as I expected—there was something up there, and, shutting my mouth and eyes to keep out the smoke as best I could, I reached up the whole length of my arm and gave another thrust. I heard something come clattering down the chimney. It fell upon the hearth and rolled across the floor, straight toward the old negro. He gave one look at the object and with a wild yell of terror leaped to his feet with chattering teeth and horrified gaze. As soon as I got some of the soot and smoke out of my nose and eyes I saw before me on the floor a round, shining, grinning skull, with its eyeless sockets fixed steadily upon the old negro. Thinking perhaps I might find something more up the chimney, I again poked about. This time I succeeded in dislodging a mass of bones, which came rattling down onto the hearth, nearly putting out my fire. To the bones a mass of rotten rags still hung, to which were attached several buttons of a peculiar pattern. The old negro regarded them for a moment in surprise. As the truth began to dawn upon his feeble mind he exclaimed huskily:

"Marse Chet, sure as I'm alive!"

And indeed it was true. After firing his one shot, fearing his opponent would take his life, he had climbed up the wide mouth of the chimney and had become fast upon the stout iron hooks inside. The noise and confusion completely drowned his cries for help. Even the thick brick walls of the chimney would have completely muffled any sounds he could have made for assistance, and so, fast upon those cruel hooks, Chester Darrel must have suffered a miserable death. I gathered up the remains as best I could, and with the help of the old negro buried what was left of his young master out in the garden in the pouring rain.

I went back into the old room and sat there smoking until I fell asleep. When I awoke the storm was over. It had stopped raining and the pale Southern moon was stealing out from behind a dark bank of clouds, throwing a bright ray of golden light across the floor and up the side of the old fireplace.

In the morning I resumed my journey.

Watch for the next instalment of "Stories of Great Detectives." It is intensely interesting and absolutely true.

FACTS ABOUT WATCHES

"I FREQUENTLY get interesting watches to repair," remarked a jeweler. "Here is one, for instance, with diamond jewels and, would you believe it, notwithstanding the hardness of the diamond, diamond jewels do not wear as well as the jewels found in the ordinary watch, the sapphire or ruby jewels. Many people place an exaggerated value on their watches because the latter have diamond jewels. A few years ago a collector of watches showed me a watch which had been picked up on the battlefield of Waterloo. The watch was a most elaborate affair, having a beautifully chased movement and diamond jewels. The jewels had actually been worn through by the steel pivot. Diamonds are all right as ornaments and in the form of bort are very serviceable for many mechanical purposes, but for watch jewels the diamond is more ornamental than useful."

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

No.
1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, By Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Critenden Marriott
14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, By Charles F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, by R. Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, by Edith S. Tupper
19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton
20 THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler
21 KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert
22 THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne
23 NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith
24 THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon.
26 THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, By Pauline Carrington Bouve
27 WHO WAS GUILTY? by Beulah Poynter
28 THE EVIL EYE, by Chas. F. Oursler
29 THE THIRTEENTH DOOR, by Edith Sessions Tupper
30 THE GAME OF DETECTIVE CAREW, By Leonard Jerome
31 LAW-MAKER AND LAW-BREAKER, By Beulah Poynter

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BACKWOODS BLUFFING

BY EDWARD HARRIGAN

A DRIPPING fog was snarled and twisted about old Ben Moore's beehouse, on the south side of Clover Hill, so the entire landscape from Seavey's brook to Black Cap looked as if it had been wrapped in a great wet rag and hung out overnight to swell. Toward the east, where the sun was trying to break out a road for the light to come in, the mists were heaped up in silver gray bales, forming a rampart which reached from infinite space right down to the middle of Luke Walker's blackberry patch.

Ben saw the misty battlements fall to fragments and retreat in disorder up the hillside before the arrows of sunlight, and felt glad in the assurance of a fair day. The bees needed dry weather for their honey, which was getting musty and almost sour, shut up in wet cells. Drying weather would not only ripen off the comb, but it would keep him away from that everlasting poker game, which the farmers wanted to play as soon as the ground grew damp so they could not work among the crops. He had played poker every day for a week now and had lost more than a pint of popcorn, which he had saved up to use in the winter when the girls came from the village to look at his bees.

"It ain't th' cost uv th' corn I keer fur, nuther," said Ben aloud, turning the question over in his mind; "but th' durned critters don't play fair. They do cheat, by vum!"

Having delivered himself of this conviction, Ben went back into the beehouse and, opening three observatory hives, looked long at three small wire cages containing as many queen bees. They were Cyprian queens, a rare breed imported from the Island of Cyprus, where they have the reputation of killing everything they sting and turning everything they touch into pure honey. Ben had paid $4.50 for the insects, and was wondering at his own extravagance when Luke Walker came through the camp door, followed by Wash Grant and Levi Pierce.

"We kum over tew git th' rest uv that corn, Ben," was Luke's greeting, seating himself on a bench beside the cross-legged table, and pulling a shabby pack of cards from the drawer. "We kinder reckoned we'd take it all to-day ef th' cards run well," he continued, as he placed a small bag of popcorn on the table and began to shuffle the cards.

"Here's mine," said Grant, fishing the kernels from the tobacco dust in his pocket.

Levi went to the bottom of an old envelope for his capital, and when the cards were properly dealt, all looked at Ben, who was reaching under the stove and saying wicked words which applied to everything in general. He overhauled a small pile of stove-wood, peered under kettles and frying pans until his face looked like a portrait done in charcoal; and finally sat down on the stove hearth with a sullen grunt of despair.

"What's th' matter?" asked Luke banteringly. "Are yer skeered tew play ag'in us or hev yer reformed sense las' night?"

For a full minute Ben stumped the soot into his face with a bandana without saying a word. He looked from Luke to Levi and Levi to Wash, shaking his head.

"Did enny uv ye take my corn?" he asked, trying to cover the three men with a one-eyed glance. Every one promptly entered voluble and indignant protests against such a foul suspicion until Ben felt they were telling the truth.

"Then th' ole yeller hen hez bin here an' et it all up so I can't play."

Ben spoke sadly, as if he regretted that hens were permitted to live, though he was inwardly glad the corn was gone, because he was tired of losing every day, with no prospect of regaining a fraction of what had been won from him.

"Le's play seven-up," he continued, seeing his companions were determined on having some kind of a game. "It's er durned sight better'n poker, I think. What d'yer say?"

The proposition was unanimously voted down.

"Try Sank, or Sank Pede?" he suggested, still hoping to escape from the costly perils of poker.

The idea was promptly negatived by three emphatic headshakes.

"Tell yer whut I will do," said Ben, with the air of a man who had made an important discovery. "Me an' Levi'll play yer er game uv euchre fer er cent er side—cut fer deal." He sat down opposite Levi and reached for the cards.

"Hol' on," cried Levi. "Don't tech them cards till I say so. Ef yer won't play poker, an' mean it, I'll jist go yer one game uv auction pitch fer two cents er side. I want ter tell yer, though, that I don't believe nothin' erbout ther ol' hen a eatin' uv yer popcorn. 'Tain't nat'ral she'd come in here an' git het up fer corn w'en there's grass-'oppers outside that want to be et—'tain't sense. Yer jist want tew git out uv th' game 'cause yer lost, an' yer ain't man enough ter say so. That's what ails yer, Ben."

Retreating behind the stove, Ben picked up the great iron kettle and swung it over his head as if it had been a toy.

"Take that back!" he yelled. "Take it back, Levi, or I'll knock th' harslet out uv yer!"

"Take back nothink!" replied Levi, edging toward the door and keeping his eyes upon the kettle. "Ther man who sez er sensible hen'll steal dry corn w'en she hes fat hoppers afore her is a liar, sir; he's a liar, I say——"

He might—and he probably would—have said much more of a similar nature if it had not been for the kettle, which, after revolving several times in a regular eclipse, all at once took a parabolic orbit and, leaving Ben's hand, made a fockety sweep toward Levi's head. It hit the side of the door-jamb a foot and a half behind Levi's coat-tails and fell into a thousand bits of rusty cast iron.

"Durn him!" groaned Ben, taking up the long-handled skillet and giving chase. "Blame his trips! I'll larn him, so I will!"

"Stop whar yer be!" commanded Luke. "You are makin' er passle uv fools uv yerselfs, all uv yer; an' it's gut tew stop."

He stood across the doorway, barring Ben's exit, and remained there until Levi had apologized for his words and Ben had said he was sorry that his temper had run away with him.

Presently they all sat down about the table and helped Ben drink a mug of hard cider drawn from the barrel in the back end of the camp. As the cider slipped down their good feelings came up, so by the time the mug was drained everybody was willing to play poker or anything. Luke put Ben in good financial standing by buying a gallon of cider from the barrel and paying for it in popcorn, which was legal tender. Thus armed for the conflict, every one took a long pull at the cider mug, and the "buck" went skating merrily around the table as the players dealt in turn.

The day grew hot as the sun bunched up the mists and sent them off post-haste on a visit among Southern cloud banks. Vapors sulked along the sides of Clover Hill until caught by a lazy wind, when they flew away clumsily, like young birds just escaped from their nest. Fat spiders, in gray fur wraps, came out to set up the rigging around their nets and then waited for new prey with the meek and patient aspect of Chinamen. Grasshoppers rasped their toothed legs against dry wing cases in the mistaken belief that they were making sweet music; ants walked forth to steal sugar or crumbs of moist gingerbread, and the blue-bottle flies stuck their feet firmly to the glazed window-panes and winked knowingly to one another as they saw the spiders twist hangman's knots for fresh victims. Outside a million bees hummed and droned monotonously, filling the air with sleep seed until the players nodded above their cards.

The game, which had progressed with varying favors during the forenoon, began to grow interesting as the sun shot his vertical rays through holes in the roof and blurred the floor with great splashes of light and shade. Luke had dealt, and every player had taken one or more cards. The betting had gone up, one and two kernels at a time, until there was nearly a pint of popcorn on the table. Pipes, which had been kept hot and smoking for three hours, lay discarded by the cider mug, and every man's gaze was bolted to the cards which he held before his face. With pale and puckered lips and with eyes staring straight ahead the men held fast and dashed into the crisis, like skilled boatmen shooting a dangerous waterfall.

"I raise yer six," said Levi, who sat next to Ben.

Ben gazed at his hand long and tenderly, like a person bidding farewell to one whom he dearly loves. Then he looked upon his dwindling pile of corn and, pushing the few remaining kernels into the pot, he cried:

"See yer an' call yer. What yer gut?"

Levi laid down three jacks, a six spot and a queen. Wash showed two tens and three deuces, and Luke, the peacemaker, flashed up three six spots.

Ben, who had discarded a six spot before the draw, knew that Luke or Levi had obtained a card by foul practice.

"Th' hul pot iz mine!" He said it firmly in a Monte Cristo tone, so that everybody but Luke believed he had won.

"Show yer keerds afore yer grab," cried Luke menacingly. "Le's see yer picters."

"I hev two aces ter begin with," said Ben, laying down the cards, "and then I hev a—a—surprise fer yer all—a real sockdolager!"

He reached behind and, opening the glass doors of three hives, allowed his Cyprian treasures to fly into the room, followed by clouds of angry bees.

"W'en I takes two aces," said Ben solemnly, "an' puts three Cyprian queens erlong with 'em, I hev er full han', and I takes ther pot. Do yer savvey that?"

Roars of pain and the patter of flying feet down the rough path were all he could get for answers. Stung and blinded by the bees, the men dashed through the woods, yelling in agony, and never looked back until they were half a mile away.

Ben watched them out of sight, and laughed until his woodbine suspenders snapped in two. Then he replaced the queens in their hives, and by the time he had dinner ready there was not a bee in camp.

"Consarn 'em!" growled Ben over his bread and molasses. "Ef three queens ain't enough I'll git more, ef it takes ev'ry cent I'm wuth. B'gosh, I will! It's lucky them cusses didn't see the rest of my cards, though, 'cause two aces an' a two, four, six don't make no winnin' poker hand, by gum!"

And he scooped in the popcorn.

Several great detective sketches will be the feature of our next number, besides the big leading story. You will certainly like them.

WILD INDIANS IN CALIFORNIA

THE discovery of the remnant of a tribe of Indians hiding in a wild and unsettled portion of Tehama county by scientists from the University of California has led to the keenest interest among anthropologists, and an effort is being made to have the Government of the United States take charge of the remaining members.

Prof. A. L. Kroeber of the department of anthropology of the University of California writes:

"When the first rumor of the untamed aborigines in Tehama county reached the University of California it was known at once who the Indians must be if they existed at all, for the so-called Kombo or Mill Creek tribe of this region had long been regarded as one of the smallest and at the same time most unique tribes in California. But as this band was last seen in 1870 the possibility of their having been able to keep themselves entirely hidden for forty years was remote.

"An expedition headed by T. T. Waterman, an instructor in the department of anthropology, was out a month, and while after the most strenuous kind of work and most vigilant care they were unable to meet any of the Indians in person they brought back evidence which indisputably proves their existence.

"The tract which they inhabit is only a few miles square and an easy day's journey from Vina on the Shasta route of the Southern Pacific Railroad. It is without question the roughest and most impenetrable stretch of country in California. The Indians know every inch of this territory. As soon as one of their trails becomes well worn they abandon it for less visible paths. The trails go under the brush instead of through it, so that the Indians do most of their traveling on hands and knees. This prevents the stock which occasionally strays into the region from following the trails and beating them out.

"If limbs have to be removed the Indians cut them with old saws or knives that they have stolen from neighboring ranchers, so as to avoid the sound of chopping with an ax, which might lead to their being located.

"As the country which they inhabit is absolutely useless even to cattle it is practically never entered. The few ranchers that cross the country prefer to travel around the tract instead of through it."

STORIES OF GREAT DETECTIVES

BY A NEW YORK JOURNALIST

The writer has had occasion professionally to learn a great deal about the real detectives. He has talked with them, corresponded with them, heard the narrative of their lives and exploits, and enjoyed in reality all the interest and excitement connected with these men that is constantly presented in the fiction of the day.

For the benefit of the thousands of readers of "Mystery Magazine," we propose to relate some of our experiences, and give a rapid glance at the most noted men in the different cities of the United States. The number of professional detectives is now very large. They are employed in every branch of the United States Government; all the great cities have a trained force, and the private agencies are to be found in all the cities, with correspondents throughout the civilized world. Our "Stories of Great Detectives" give, perhaps, the first familiar relation ever attempted of the characteristics of the great detectives who have made the detection of crime a new science.

ANDREW L. DRUMMOND

"I SEE you are feeling well, Tom Ballard," said a gentlemanly looking person to a prisoner in Ludlow street prison, in New York.

The prisoner turned pale at the mention of his real name, for he had been committed under a false one. He gasped out:

"For God's sake, who are you?"

The gentlemanly man turned back the lapel of his coat, disclosing the silver star, marked "U. S. Secret Service."

Ballard immediately fainted away.

It was in summer that Drummond first arrested the great counterfeiter, Tom Ballard, who gave a false name, but was known to the detective. Ballard was called the "Prince of Phony Men." He was a splendid engraver and the only counterfeiter who knew the secret for making fibrous Treasury paper. Once Ballard was sentenced to the Albany penitentiary for a term of thirty years.

We mention the above incident to show what dread the United States Secret Service and such a noted and keen officer as Drummond inspired in the rich and great counterfeiters. Wherever he was on duty he was the mortal fear of the whole of them. The Secret Service Division was organized in 1865, and belongs to the Treasury Department, with the headquarters in Washington.

One day we said to Drummond at the entrance of the elevator:

"Your career has been exciting."

"Rather," he replied, with a smile. "My scrapbooks upstairs contain good plots for many novels."

"When can you these deeds relate?"

"Well, come in after five o'clock to-morrow."

As he stood there talking, with the most cheerful face and polite and affable manners, he looked to be a very harmless sort of man. In his hand was a slight cane, with which he gently beat the leg of his pantaloons or rapped on the staircase.

And yet it would not be well for every one to presume that he was no more than the thousands of other well-dressed young men who were rushing along the streets.

In an instant he could change from the lamb into the lion.

Let any counterfeiter come along who was "wanted," no matter how desperate a man he might be, and in the twinkle of your eye Drummond would grasp him with his vise-like hands and handcuff him. It is wonderful how strong he was, how his eyes lighted up with the fire of courage—and he would accomplish his purpose or die in the effort.

When we called at the Secret Service office, according to appointment, we asked:

"Is Mr. Drummond in?"

"Gone to Troy," was the answer.

"Why, he made an appointment here at this hour," we said, in surprise.

"No doubt," replied the gentleman. "Often he does not come back when he expects to. If he hits on a clue of anybody or anything he is off in an instant, wherever it may lead."

It was some days before we saw Detective Drummond in his office. In fact, no other time could be found except a Sunday, when there was a partial cessation from his labors.

When we came into the private office he took off his coat and his cuffs. Then he removed a very pretty pistol from the "pistol pocket" of his pantaloons, took his seat at his desk and remarked:

"Now fire away with your questions."

In the course of the next two hours he gave us the particulars of his life and of many exciting adventures.

We may as well describe the office. It consisted of three rooms, entered by different doors, and yet all connected inside. At each end were private rooms, and in the middle was a room with a railing inclosing a space between the partitions, which had two chairs, but no opening to the rooms. Several detectives were on duty there at all times, and there the plans were made for the outside work. A report of all proceedings was sent to Washington at the close of each day.

A part of the records consisted of great scrapbooks, in which were pasted all the newspaper accounts of counterfeiters, arrests, trials, etc. Some of these books were even indexed and kept in a most careful manner. Detective Drummond was a fine penman and everything which he did himself or superintended was done with care and elaboration.

He was born in Pennsylvania and worked on his father's farm until he was thirteen years of age. After this he learned the trade of a harnessmaker and before he was fifteen he went to sea on a coasting vessel. Later he came to New York and shipped on both the coastwise and foreign-going steamers as cook, second mate, ship storekeeper and assistant purser. He had eleven years of sea life and, with the intelligence and shrewdness which were natural to him, he picked up a vast amount of knowledge of men and things in these wanderings. He was a clerk in New York for a short time. Next he was commissioned in the Secret Service Division. First stationed in New York, he subsequently was sent to all parts of the United States and Canada, wherever a sharp detective was most required. During the troubles in Louisiana he was in that State. Later he was made chief special agent in the Philadelphia district. He arrested many counterfeiters. He again came to New York and had charge of both this and the Philadelphia districts for some time.

He has been connected with all the important arrests of counterfeiters of past years. On one occasion, after months of watching, he arrested fourteen belonging to a single gang. A majority of them were lured to a suite of rooms on the top floor of a downtown hotel, where they were handcuffed and marched off to Ludlow Street Prison.

The arrest of J. B. Doyle, known as "the boss of the boodle and king of outside men," was one of those in which Drummond was suddenly led off on a long journey. The men had been shadowed by the detectives. One day Brockway and Doyle, the latter carrying a new valise, rode down to a restaurant in Park Row, where they ate their supper.

"I was an observer of that meal," said Drummond, with a sly smile on his good-natured face as he recalled the incident. "I suspected that the valise in Doyle's possession contained 'evidence' in the shape of plates, bills, stock, etc., connected with an anticipated new deal in counterfeit hundreds."

After the meal the men went out and stood for some time in front of the Postoffice in conversation. Then they parted, and Doyle, with the valise, went in the direction of the Jersey City ferry.

No time was to be lost. Drummond and another detective followed and took passage on the same train with Doyle for Chicago. Nothing was done until Doyle attempted to leave the train near Chicago, when he was arrested. In the valise, instead of the counterfeit hundreds, there were found spurious bonds of the value of over two hundred thousand dollars, and a large amount of good money.

When watching the house in New York where Doyle lived the detectives had noticed the curtains taken down, and this induced them to believe that some one was going away. When the valise was opened the bonds were found wrapped up in these identical curtains.

"One of my most exciting, while laughable, adventures was in Mississippi," once said Detective Drummond. "Wishing to 'pump' a counterfeiter confined in jail, I procured my own arrest by an arrangement with the United States District Attorney. They carried me off to prison, and thought me a very desperate man. The United States Marshal said to me: 'Surrender your arms or I'll blow your head off.' "

Drummond laughed heartily at this recollection, and continued:

"I began tapping with a stick on the handcuffs they had put on me, when the negro sheriff rushed up and yelled: 'Dat desperate man tryin' ter 'scape.' "

They put him in jail, where he duly pumped the counterfeiter, and then he broke out and went on his way.

"I found myself in a pretty tight place once in Wisconsin," said Detective Drummond, as our conversation continued. "Revelations were made to me by the wife of a counterfeiter in prison that induced me to set about the arrest of a gang in that State. They were all desperate men, and horsethieves as well as counterfeiters.

"I disguised myself to represent a man who had long been away from the neighborhood. It was an out-of-the-way place and there was little chance for me if they found me out. I had an interview with one of the men in a lonely barn and negotiations were entered into for the purchase of counterfeit money. He made up his mind I was a regular dealer in the 'queer.' He put to me all sorts of shrewd questions and watched me closely all the time. Among other things he spoke of one Detective Drummond, who was in that part of the country, and told me what his terrible fate would be if he ever fell into the hands of the band. At last he proposed that I should go to the house and let the family see me. If they said I was the man I represented myself to be it would be all right.

"This proposition rather staggered me, but there was no back out now. So I went to the house, where one after another of the family scrutinized me. They inspected me in every way and talked with me. I braced up boldly to the ordeal, but I did not know but that I would be denounced as a fraud any moment. Presently I was beckoned outside, when the man told me that his father fully recognized me as the person I represented myself to be. This made me very happy indeed."

A trade for a quantity of the "queer" was then made, and the detective rode away with all the evidence he required for the arrest of the gang.

When Detective Drummond subsequently visited the house in his true character as an officer, one of the gang, thinking that he was to be arrested, rushed at the detective with a drawn knife and was himself shot, severing a piece of his ear.

The head man was not at home. He was induced to come to the hotel next morning, when Detective Drummond followed him into a room and, placing a pistol at his head, arrested him. Even then he did not recognize Drummond. He was dumbfounded when he found out that the detective and the man to whom he had sold the counterfeit money were one and the same person.

Two hundred cases of Detective Drummond would fill volumes. All are marked by the shrewdest and most intelligent detective work, and many by the most heroic exploits. He was a social, cheerful and warm-hearted man in all his private relations. When you talked with him you were struck with his sensible opinions, his wide observation, and especially his knowledge of human nature. He was a married man, with a family of six children. When we left him, after our long chat, we were impressed with two things. One was that Detective Drummond was a man of rare qualities for his position and profession. The other was that, as a genial and interesting talker, he had few equals.

Inspector Thomas Byrnes and W. S. Baubien will be the subjects of our next article in this series. They will grip your interest wonderfully.

A WONDERFUL CAVE

ONE of the most wonderful caves in the world is in eastern Kentucky. Unexplored and almost unknown, its grandeur has been seen by few. The cave is in the foothills of the Cumberland Mountains, on the line of the Fort Creek headquarters. Two or three exploring parties have ventured into the maze of the vast subterranean passageways, but none has ever reached the end. The searchers report passageways, rooms and chambers innumerable, and transparent stalactitic columns of great beauty. One room has a floor as level and as smooth as a dance hall. Others have fathomless pits. Evidently human beings have visited the cave before only to lose their lives trying to find their way out, for old kettles, parts of dishes, rotted lanterns and other utensils were discovered. The cave will be penetrated farther by exploring parties for more passages.

A COAT SLEEVE

The Story of a New York Detective

By G. G. SMALL

CHAPTER SEVEN

"COME along," said I; and then turning to Nats, I asked: "Will you come along peaceably, or shall I put a pair of nippers on you?"

"I—I'll go quietly," he whispered.

"All right. Are you all ready, Mr. Duff?"

A dogged grunt was his only reply, but we assisted him to finish putting on his clothes, after which we marched him to headquarters, and into the presence of Chief Matsell.

"Hello, Tom Duff!" said the old man, after looking at him a moment.

"Hello, chief!" said Duff, stolidly.

"Well, officers, how is it you happen to have scooped in this fellow?"

It did not take long to explain matters to the chief, but when we came to Nats to confirm the buying of the coat, the cowardly fool did not dare to speak a word.

"Well, never mind him now. Just turn a key on him for the present," said he, speaking to an attendant officer.

The poor wretch was collared and led away, struggling and moaning in the most piteous manner.

"Mr. Matsell, this is an outrage," said Duff, speaking almost for the first time.

"Well, Tom, if it is, we will give you a certificate of good, moral character, and allow you to go, free as a bird. Take off his bracelets," he added.

I obeyed orders.

"Now strip him to the buff, down as far as the waist."

"What is that for?" demanded Duff, starting indignantly.

"We want to see if you have got any marks on you," replied the chief, while Phil and I proceeded to take off his clothes down to his waist.

The chief left his chair and approached him.

There on his right arm were the blood-red marks of human teeth!

All three of us looked at the terrible and damning evidence.

"What made that mark?" demanded the chief, pointing to it. "Tell the truth, Tom."

"Of course I will. I got into a fight with a fellow and he bit me," said he.

"You was struggling with him?"

"Yes."

"Over on the Sixteenth street dock, eh?"

Duff colored at first, and then grew pale.

"No, over in Hoboken."

"Indeed! Put the coat upon him."

This we proceeded to do, but found Duff so nervous that we could scarcely do so.

"There, that appears to fit you pretty well, Tom. Guess it must have been made for you. But it somehow strikes me as queer that one sleeve should be of different material than the other part of the coat."

"What farce is this, Mr. Matsell?"

"No farce, sir, as we shall presently show you. Take off the coat and cut cut the new sleeve."

This order was obeyed.

"Now put the coat on again without the sleeve, and let us see how he looks in it."

This was also done.

"Now, officer, let me have that fragment of a garment which you found near the scene of the murder on the Sixteenth street dock."

I handed him the coat-sleeve, and he at once proceeded to pull it on, and to fit it just where it originally belonged.

The dealer in repairing it had not altered the original cut of the arm-hole in the least, and the sleeve fitted into its place perfectly.

"There, what do you think of that, Tom?"

"Don't understand it."

"Well, perhaps I can assist you in doing so. Do you see those holes in the sleeve?"

"Yes; what of them?"

"They were made by human teeth, and they are directly over and correspond with the teeth marks on your arm. Your arm was bitten through this coat-sleeve. It was bitten on East Sixteenth street dock, by Thomas Page, whom you either murdered or helped to murder there," said the old chief, with a vehemence that was startling.

Duff attempted to speak, but words failed him for a moment.

Finally he controlled himself sufficiently to deny the whole thing.

"It will not do, Tom Duff. The web has been woven around you too tightly. Confess now who were your accomplices?"

"I know nothing about it," said he, gruffly.

"We shall see about that. Do you know a man by the name of Wilbur?"

"No; I do not."

"Do you know a woman by that name?"

"No; I do not."

"And you refuse to squeal?"

"I know nothing about the matter."

"All right. We'll lock you up for a while, and give you a chance to refresh your memory. Take him away."

In a few moments Tom Duff was safe in a strong cell, and we returned for further orders from the chief.

"Officers, you are doing well—first-rate. Indeed, this arrest is one of the neatest bits of business I ever knew of. You are gradually untangling the mystery. Now, there are at large the Wilburs and this woman, 'Page.' They must be taken, and then we have the whole thing complete. And then the newspapers, who have been having so much to say about the inefficiency of the police, shall have a story that will make people acknowledge us—'The finest police in the world.'"

The brave old chief spoke with great earnestness, and, naturally enough, we both felt flattered and elated.

Well, with a part of the bevy run to cover, we felt more courage for hunting up the remainder of the gang, and so the next morning we began.

I first visited the surrogate's office, where I learned that Mrs. Page's case would not be acted upon for at least a month, and that she, in the meantime, had signified her intention of going out of town for a few weeks.

There was one consolation in knowing that she had not gone away because of any suspiciou, and so I felt certain of capturing her in a few weeks at most.

Chief Matsell, in the meantime, had lodged with the district attorney, proof or indications of fraud in the case so as to be ready to act at the earliest moment when the opportunity should become ripe.

It was only a day or two after this transaction that I received a letter from the superintendent of the insane asylum at Philadelphia, in reference to Mrs. Page.

I had made an arrangement with him to keep me informed regarding the woman, and to spare no pains in trying to cure her.

He informed me that after the paroxysm into which the photograph threw her had passed away, she became calmer, and had shown evidences of improvement ever since.

He spoke of it as not an unusual thing, as many instances were on record of people in her condition meeting with some great shock which either killed or cured them.

In this case it seemed to have worked a cure, or at least it had developed tendencies to sanity in the patient which no medical treatment ever could have accomplished, in all human probability; and in closing, he asked me to visit her again in a few weeks, when she would probably be able to converse with me in a more rational manner.

That, I wrote him back, I would do just as soon as I had finished the great piece of business which I had in hand, and which would redound to her benefit.

In the case of the fraudulent Mrs. Page, I held a warrant for her arrest on a charge of fraud, and all I wanted was an opportunity of serving it.

This, of course, would put a stop to her case before the surrogate, but I did not want that even he should know of it until I had fastened it upon her, lest she might take alarm and flee the coutnry.

So I kept everything to myself and waited.

One day there came a man to headquarters to see the chief regarding the Page murder, and to inquire what had been done with the dead man's effects, he claiming to be a brother.

Mr. Matsell was very busy with the captains, and so turned him over to me.

We conversed for some time, during which I gave him a history of the murder, for he claimed to have been in St. Louis when he heard of the tragedy.

"Where is his body buried?" he asked.

"In Greenwood Cemetery."

"But he was rich."

"Yes, quite so."

"And where is his property?"

"In the hands of the proper law officers."

"I am his only relative living, and have come clear from St. Louis to take possession of it."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. How long a time will it take to prove the matter and settle up the business?"

"Well, that depends a great deal upon many other things."

"What other things?" he asked.

"How long has it been since you saw your brother?"

"Nearly fifteen years."

"Are your parents dead?"

"Yes."

"And you are his only living relative?"

"Yes, with the exception of a few cousins."

"How long has it been since you heard from your brother?"

"We have never corresponded. We parted bad friends, and never wrote to each other after. But of course I can claim his property."

He seemed to think much more of that than he did of the tragic death of his brother.

"Oh, of course; provided," I answered.

"Provided!"

"Yes."

"Provided what?"

"He left no nearer relatives."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Simply what I say."

"When his parents are dead, and he has no living sister, what relationship can there be nearer than that of a brother?" he asked.

"A wife!"

"A what?" he exclaimed.

"He has a living widow."

"Great God!" he whispered; "I never knew that he was married."

"Well, that is not so strange, seeing that you have heard nothing of each other for fifteen years. I dare say he did not know, at the time of his death, whether you were married or not."

"Yes; but the papers said he was a bachelor," persisted the man rather chopfallen.

"I know they did; but even newspapers are liable to mistakes at times."

"I don't believe it. He always said he should never marry," he persisted.

"Well, men frequently change their minds as they grow older, you know."

"What proof have you of his marriage?"

"Well, I have seen his wife. I have seen their certificate of marriage——"

"That may have been forged."

"Yes; but I saw the minister who married them, and he vouched for the genuineness of the certificate. Does that satisfy you?"

"Where is his widow?"

"In Philadelphia."

"Do you know her address?"

"I do."

"Will you give it to me?"

"It would do you no good if I did."

"Why not?"

"Because she is in a lunatic asylum."

"The devil you say!"

"Yes; been there for some time, and sent there on account of suffering caused by the refusal of her husband to live with her, although he always supported her well."

"Well, this is news indeed," he mused.

"I thought it would be."

"But if she is insane, what is to hinder my getting the estate?"

He was all the while after that estate.

"Because the laws of New York, where he died, and the laws of Pennsylvania, where his widow lives, are such that the public administrator takes charge of all property possessed or that may be inherited while the inheritor is in a public institution as she is."

"Good gracious!" he muttered, for this information appeared to break him all up.

I had no sympathy for him, anyhow, for he acted so much like a hog.

He might have been his brother, and he might have been an adventurer, but as I didn't wish any more strings to my bow until I got them all straightened out that I had, I didn't bother myself to find out whether he was fraudulent or genuine.

But either way, I guess I sickened him of his hope of getting that estate, for I never saw or heard anything more about him afterwards.

It is one of the strangest things in the world what a number of adventuresses, ghouls and adventurers there are lying in wait to hover about such cases as this.

And many a man's reputation has been smirched and bedaubed after he is in his grave by these same creatures.

They watch the papers closely, and if they can find a case like this Page case, where a bachelor dies without leaving a will, they study up the case attentively, and after they think they have mastered it, they come to the front and claim to be the wives of these dead men.

You know this as well as I do, but I mention it in this connection because, although you will scarcely believe it, still another woman went to Chief Matsell about this time, claiming to be the clandestine wife of Thomas Page, and asking for his advice as to how she should proceed to get possession of his property, now in the hands of the public officers.

You can imagine how the old fraud-hating chief looked up at her over his gold-bowed spectacles!

"What is that you say, madam?" he asked, actually astonished.

"I wanted to ask your advice, sir."

"About what, madam?"

"Why, you know I just told you that I was the wife of Thomas Page——"

"Thomas Page, who was murdered on the Sixteenth street dock?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, sir; I was away, up in Vermont, with my parents when the terrible thing occurred, and I only learned of it through the papers," said she, mopping her eyes with a fine mourning handkerchief.

"Oh, that is it, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"And that accounts for your not being at the funeral, does it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, there was rather a dearth of widows at that old bachelor's funeral, I must admit."

"Old bachelor! Sir?"

"Well, you know he was generally regarded as a bachelor." said Matsell, with some of the grim humor for which he was famous.

"Yes; he never cared to have it known that we were married."

"I dare say!

"But he was very good and true to me, and we loved each other dearly."

"Have you visited his grave?"

"Oh, every day; and I shall continue to do so as long as I live; winter or summer I shall strew flowers and shed tears on my dear Thomas' grave."

"What is the number of his grave?"

The old man thought to give her a playful tip on that point, but she had him, and unhesitatingly gave the number and the avenue on which the grave was located.

"Do all of his widows strew flowers and shed tears over his grave?"

"I—I don't understand you, sir."

"Are they all as devoted in their sorrow as you appear to be?"

There was just the slightest trace of one of his grim semi-smiles upon his face as he continued to quiz her as a cat might play with a mouse in its power.

"Again, I do not understand you, sir," said she, all the while looking as much like a sorrowing widow as possible.

"Do you generally meet over there?"

"I must beg your pardon once more, sir."

"Oh, don't mind me."

"But I come to ask your advice, sir."

"About what, as I asked before?"

"About how I shall proceed to get possession of my husband's property."

"Madam, I have been a magistrate and a chief of police for many years, but in all my experience I never have seen so hard a specimen of female cheek as you now present. I have a great mind to put you under arrest."

"What for, pray?"

"For a fraud, madam."

"A frand!"

"Yes, as you know you are. But most likely you do not know that two other women, one of them a fraud like yourself, and a real wife, have appeared upon the surface since his death, but such is the case," said he, looking her steadily in the face.

"Oh, there must be some mistake," said she, considerably flustrated.

"Yes, there certainly is a mistake, and you have made it by coming here in the way you have. Are you not ashamed of yourself, maid or madam, whichever you may be? How dare you take such a risk as this with a public official?"

"Oh, I am sure there must be a mistake," she simpered.

"Yes, a great one. You came here to ask my advice?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, my advice to you is to turn to an honest calling if you can do so. You are not sharp enough for a thief or a confidence woman. If you attempt the rôle of either one you will fail, and fetch up in Sing Sing. Go, and live just as good a life as you can."

"Well, sir, but——"

"Not another word! You know you are not the widow of Thomas Page, just as well as I know it, but you are not smart enough to be anything but an honest woman."

The truth of this remark was so epigrammatic that the woman bowed her head, but whether before its truthfulness, or in shame, would be hard to say.

"Go home, madam!" said he finally, "and remember one fortunate thing: that a man who is the father of daughters found a tender spot in his heart for you; not because you were entitled to it, but because you are a woman. Go!"

Bowed and chagrined, the woman withdrew from the office without a word, and the grand old chief returned to his desk.

But I am wandering away from the story I started on, so let's return.

"Mike" and Tom Duff were safely under lock and key, their arrests being kept secret, even from the newspaper reporter, who is supposed to be everywhere and to find out everything; for had it been known, ten to one some friend of theirs, or at least of Tom's, who had served out his sentence, would have gotten out a writ of *habeas corpus* and spoiled the whole business.

Phil and I were out every day. We went the rounds of the depots. We were on the avenue during the fashionable promenade hours, sometimes in one disguise, sometimes in another, but none of our game came in sight

There was one consolation: it would be only a short time before Mrs. Page would return to attend to her business before the surrogate, and then it would be an easy matter to snap her up.

But how about Louise Wilbur and her reputed brother? Where had they gone?

Would they ever return to New York, or were they here even now?

These questions bothered me much more than they did Phil, who, old in the business, had learned to take things calmly.

But his watchful eye never closed. It was always out for game. Back ten years he could remember, and he knew just who was "wanted," and exactly what they were wanted for.

One day, while walking together on Broadway, near Union Square, a taxicab was driven hurriedly past with two females.

I caught just a glimpse of one of the faces, and clutched Phil by the arm.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Quick! will you know the chauffeur again?" I asked, without answering his question.

"Yes; he's a Madison Square stander. Why?"

"I'd almost swear that one of those women in that cab was Louis Wilbur."

"It might have been only a resemblance," suggested Phil, looking after the taxi, which by this time was lost in the crowd of vehicles that crush and jam through Broadway.

"True, it might have been only that." I replied musingly; "and, come to think of it, she had blonde hair, whereas Louise Wilbur's was of a darker hue."

"Well, for that matter, the change of color from even black to straw-color is no uncommon occurrence nowadays."

"Yes. I have heard they bleach their hair considerably."

"Why, bless your soul, I know as many as ten crooked women who have changed from black or brown hair to golden blondes within the last year; so I am no longer surprised at not knowing them at first."

"Does it disguise them much?"

"Indeed it does. Why, even the old man was deceived by one of them not long ago."

"Is that possible?" I asked; for I had come to believe it impossible to deceive him.

"Yes. She was a notorious shop-lifter, and Billy Vaughn brought her in with about three-hundred dollars' worth of silk in her pocket-bag; and, although he knew her well, he said they had scooped in a new crook.

"Well, how about this? Suppose we take a walk up to Madison Square and see if he can find that chauffeur?"

"All right. He'll probably be back there again before long."

So we walked leisurely uptown and around the Square in search of the man; for, in spite of myself, I could not make myself believe but that the face in the taxicab belonged to Louise Wilbur, notwithstanding she was dressed differently from what I had ever seen her, and had a wealth of straw-colored hair.

I never forget a face, or where I have seen it, and that has been one of the secrets of my success in the business.

"I'll tell you what," said Phil, "these fellows around here are crooked, as they are around Union and Chatham Squares. They know me, but do not know you; and so, just as quick as I get my lamps on him, I'll mosey off, and let you sling the gab."

"All right."

We waited around for nearly an hour, when the chauffeur came up, coming through Twenty-third street, and took his stand.

"That's him," said Phil, as I approached him slowly.

"Have a taxi, sir?" he asked.

"Well, yes, on one consideration. You just drove a couple of ladies somewhere?"

"Yes," said he; and he eyed me sharply, evidently suspecting something.

"Do you know them?"

"No. Why?"

"Oh, nothing; only I should like to make the acquaintance of the light-haired one. Can you work it for a tener?"

"Nixy," he answered squarely.

"Do you drive her out often?"

"Sometimes I do."

"Is she straight?"

"Yes, an' married. So yer can't come no mashin' business there."

"Will you tell me where she lives?"

"No, sir."

"Not for a fiver?"

"Nixy. What's yer lay, ole man?"

"You understand," said I winking at him in a suggestive way.

"You can't work any points there."

"How do you know I can not?"

"Well, yer can't through me, an' don't let it slip outer yer mem'ry-pan," said he.

"Well, you needn't be so short about it," said I, seeing no prospect of success.

"That's all right, Mr. Man," said he, at the same time turning away to speak to some of his companions.

I walked back—not to where Phil was, for he was well known to them, and feeling sure that he suspected me, and that they were watching me, I would not confirm their suspicions by joining with a well-known detective.

Phil saw the point, and as I sauntered over to the Fifth Avenue Hotel he followed, and soon after joined me in the bar-room.

He was not disguised at all, while I was, deeming it prudent to do so, since I was out for the Wilburs, and they had seen me undisguised.

"Well?" was his first question.

"The fellow suspected something, and would not give me a point."

"When Jake Pell protects anybody, you may bet your life they are crooked; for he, like 'Mike,' has the entire confidence of the tony crooks; and whether she is the girl you are after or not, you may bet she is crooked, at all events."

"That's undoubtedly so; and I made up my mind when he refused to tell me who she was, or where she lived, that she wasn't straight, and more than likely she was just who I suspected her of being," said I.

"Well, there is no help for it now; but we'll just watch that fellow, for more than likely he drives the same party out every day. We'll have a private rig in front of the Hoffman House, ready to follow the moment he starts to-morrow."

The idea was a good one.

A police officer, on whose beat these men are, informed us that they seldom left to drive regular customers before nine o'clock, with the exception of those who were driven downtown to business, and so we engaged a taxicab to stand in front of the Hoffman House, under orders, from nine o'clock until discharged.

(To be continued.)

CURRENT NEWS

LEMON TREE BEARS ORANGES

From the *Journal of Heredity* we learn of a rather novel case of a lemon tree which proceeded to produce oranges. The tree, supposedly of the ordinary Italian lemon variety, was transplanted to Egypt. When it bore fruit it was noticed that the lemons were more spherical than lemons usually are and bore an orange colored stripe. One branch bore a large fruit which was unmistakably an orange.

AIRPLANES TO HERD CATTLE

The airplane scout will replace the picturesque cowboy on the ranches of the West within a few years if inquiries received at the Glenn Martin airplane plant, Cleveland, S. D., are any indication. Ranch owners plan to use the machines to trace lost cattle and sheep, scores of letters received at the plant indicate. Peace-time orders are not being booked, however, as the company is busy on Government work.

DREAMED THIEF'S NAME

A dream in which the name of the person who robbed him recently in a hotel on the south side, Bethelehem, Pa., of money that he intended to use in paying for a Liberty bond for his son in France, led Levi Fogel of Lehighton to cause the arrest of Benjamin Franklin of the same place. Franklin admitted the theft, stating that he took $130 from Fogel. Only $16 was recovered. Alderman Rueter committed Franklin to jail. Fogel went home to try to dream a plan to get back the missing $114.

WHAT TWO CAVES CONTAINED

Only twenty miles from Phoenix an Arizona man, Joseph Yberri, in exploring three caves on the edge of a gulch, came upon the traces of an old conflict, whose cause and date are still a mystery to the community. Observing that one of the caves was protected by a breastwork of stone and timber, he entered and discovered among scattered saddles, spurs and cartridge shells eight skeletons.

Seventeen more were found in the other caves, but there was no clue to show how these men had perished. A sack of tobacco was there, and empty flour bags, coffee cups, and pails which bore labels indicating that they were in the market no longer ago than 1903. A Mexican herb, such as the Papago Indians carry, was found.

FIND MAN'S SKELETON

The mysterious disappearance of Smith Flohr, an eighty-two-year-old mountaineer of Fountaindale, near Waynesboro, Pa., who had been missing since August 20 and for whom a search covering the Blue Ridge Mountains for miles around has been going on since, was solved when two lumbermen, John Brown and Solomon Monn, while passing through a densely wooded section of the mountains near Old Forge, stumbled across the skeleton of a man. Near by a hat and coat enabled the discoverers of the body to identify it as that of Flohr.

On the day of the old mountaineer's disappearance he had been visiting a son, Irving S. Flohr, at Mountaindale, and decided toward evening to make his way across to Blue Ridge Summit, where another son, D. S. Flohr, lived. Despite efforts to dissuade him, Flohr started out across the mountains. From that moment until his skeleton was discovered about a mile from the main mountain road, his whereabouts puzzled the countryside. It is now assumed that he became confused, wandered into the thicket and after becoming exhausted, collapsed and later died of starvation.

A USEFUL PLANT USED BY THE INDIES

A few years ago real Indian shawls bore extravagant prices, and purchasers distinguished them by their odor. In fact, they are perfumed with patchouli. The French manufacturers had for some time successfully imitated the Indian fabric, but could not impart the odor. At length they discovered the secret and began to import this plant to perfume articles of their own make. From this origin the perfumers have brought it into use.

The powdered leaves are put into muslin bags to prevent cloth from being attacked by moths. The leaf is largely imported by Mogul merchants. It is used in India as an ingredient in tobacco for smoking and for scenting the hair of women, and the essential oil is in common use among the superior classes of natives for imparting the peculiar fragrance of the leaf to clothes.

The Arab merchants buy it chiefly, employing it for stuffing mattresses and pillows, asserting that it is very efficacious in preventing contagion and in prolonging life.

SIMPLE PERFUME-MAKING

Few people know how easy it is to capture the fragrance of real flowers. The first step in the plan is to secure a glass funnel. The small end of this instead of opening should be drawn out to a fine point. Some means must be adopted to maintain the funnel in an upright position. A little stand made of wooden uprights and wire is shown in the photograph. Any kind of highly scented flowers, such as roses, may be gathered; these should be in fresh condition as, just after opening, the fragrance is at its best. Place these in a vase filled with water so that they will not wither. Now get some ice and crush this into small fragments using it to fill up the glass funnel. At the same time place some receptacle under the funnel. Sprinkle salt on the ice and then move the flowers and the funnel into close proximity.

After a while it will be seen that the moisture from the atmosphere is condensed on the outside of the funnel, the surface of which is chilled by the ice. The ethereal odor of the flowers combines with this liquid which slowly trickles down by drops into the receptacle. When a sufficient quantity is secured this may be mixed with about an equal quantity of pure alcohol. The mixture should then be placed in bottles when it will keep for an indefinite time. In this way all kinds of flower perfume may be capture with the greatest ease.

FOSSILS FROM THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

A late report on the explorations and field-work of the Smithsonian Institution in 1917 records a remarkable collection of fossils made by Secretary and Mrs. Walcott at the now well-known "Burgess Pass fossil quarry," near Field, British Columbia, discovered in 1910. In the course of 50 days' work the party took out a section of the quarry about 180 feet square, thus practically exhausting a site that has yielded the finest and largest series of Middle Cambrian fossils yet discovered, and the finest invertebrate fossils yet found in any formation. More than a ton and a half of specimens were trimmed out at a quarry, wrapped in bundles, carried by pack horses to camp and thence to the railway station at Field, whence they were shipped to Washington. Large blocks of hard shale were first blasted loose, then carefully split with chisel and hammer to expose any fossil remains between the laminae. The shale has preserved for some twenty million years animals that were as soft and non-resistant as jellyfish, worms, crabs, etc., notwithstanding all the vicissitudes these rocks have since undergone from the time they were simply hardened mud. They have been subjected to much pressure and profound chemical change, but the fossils remain perfect.

OIL FROM SAND

The urgent appeal of the Government for a greater production of petroleum to meet the demands of war has stimulated activity in all oil fields of the country, says O. J. Grimes in the January *Popular Mechanics Magazine.* But probably in no other district have such unusual methods been employed to gain production as in the Uintah basin, which is situated partly in Utah and partly in Colorado. Here oil production was sought by driving tunnels instead of wells, and this region can now boast of two oil mines.

The West is especially fortunate in the matter of oil sands. Besides several big deposits in the Uintah basin, probably the largest deposit of saturated oil sands on the continent, if not in the world, which has been brought to the surface by nature, has been discovered in the San Rafael country, in Southeastern Utah. The great oil sand reefs are exposed there for many miles, but as yet very little has been done to develop this resource because of its isolation from the outside world. The region where the sands are situated in approximately 125 miles from a railroad, by the roads now in use, and is reached only by crossing a desert. However, interest in the proposition has been aroused recently. New highways are being constructed, water wells put down along the highways, and plans are being formulated for active development of the oil sand deposits.

GHOSTS ARE STILL AT LARGE

Ghosts are extremely ancient. The people of old who dwelt in caves were well acquainted with them. In the lives of primitive peoples of to-day a very important part is played by ghosts. Their world is thickly populated with them. When a man sleeps his phantasm, which cannot sleep, goes a-traveling. With this phantasm he is quite familiar, because it visibly attends him in the daytime. It is his shadow. Savages are usually more or less afraid of shadows. To the savage not only animate but even inanimate things have their ghosts. Concealed within every object is a mystery—a noumenon lurking behind the phenomenon, as a psychologist would express the idea. In any rock there is fire hidden. One has only to strike it with another piece of rock and sparks fly. Among the most appaling spooks that haunt the Iroquois is a carnivorous ghost that feeds on men. Echo, in their belief, is a phantom that repeats their words mockingly among the hills. Particularly malevolent are certain huge heads, without bodies, that go flying about. Formerly there dwelt under Niagara Falls a gigantic snake, which now and then would make its way to an Indian village and coil itself around the town. It swallowed the people and made itself further obnoxious by poisoning the springs and wells with its spittle. The Hiwasse River, in the Southern Allegheny region, is infested by an enormous leech. Occasionally a certain ledge of rock is exposed when the water is low, so that people are tempted to cross over it. Anybody who tries to do so, however, is inevitably seized and sucked down. Near the head of the Savannah River are the famous Talulu Falls. It has been well known for centuries that the Thunder spirit lives beneath these falls, and its roaring may at any time be heard in the noise of the cataract. One hundred miles to the southeast of Death Valley in California is Dead Mountain, which is the abode of multitudes of ghosts. At all events the Indians so believe, though when one approaches the mountain one perceives that the spooks are merely broken and precipitous rocks shining white in the sun.

FOREST FIRES OF SPONTANEOUS ORIGIN

It is usually assumed that forest fires, when not the result of a stroke of lightning, are the result of carelessness on the part of lumbermen, campers, picknickers, or wayfarers. A French scientist, Mr. G. Raymond, denies this, and offers several interesting hypotheses in a brief article in *La Nature* (Paris) to account for spontaneous fires. He notes first that such fires always occur under the same conditions, namely, when the weather is dry, hot and windy, as for example, during the blowing of the "mistral" in southern Europe. To begin with, he considers it entirely possible that the dry and resinous branches of a pine forest might develop enough friction in a high hot wind to strike fire, the case being analogous to the method in which various savages obtain fire by a "fire stick." Again, minute drops of resin, spherical in form, might act as lenses to bring the sun's rays to a focus, thus setting fire to the inflammable materials around them.

A third suggestion is that since the ground of a pine forest, covered with needles and other decomposing matter, often acquires a very high degree of heat in the summer months, even a temperature several degrees above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, there may result catalytic effects in the presence of impalpable resinous substances.

Lastly Mr. Raymond considers the effect of a possible engendering of frictional electricity in scraps of bark, pine needles, etc., driven hither and thither by the wind. It is indeed a well known fact, that in the right weather conditions many persons can light a gas jet merely by pointing a finger at it, after shuffling rapidly over the carpet so as to develop a large amount of electricity through friction. Similarly the mere shaking of a blanket in the Sahara often causes it to emit a shower of sparks. Apropos of this the African explorer, Foureau, often mentioned the fact that during the blowing of the simoom in the desert his pocket compass was rendered utterly unreliable by reason of the electricity developed in its glass cover by the friction of the sand against it, driven before the burning wind. So it appears eminently reasonable to conclude that some, at least, of our forest fires may be attributed to such causes as these, and that locomotives and campers and lumbermen may be acquitted of universal responsibility.

THE BENEDICTION OF THE BEASTS

One of the strangest rites of modern Christendom is that known as the "Benediction of the Beasts," which is performed annually in Spain, Portugal and Italy on St. Anthony's Day, the 17th of January. This quaint ceremony is usually performed at churches dedicated to St. Anthony. One of these ancient edifices is in Rome, and here every year hundreds of owners of horses, asses, cattle, dogs, cats and even hogs bring their animals to be blessed and sprinkled. It is believed that this service places the beasts under the protection of St. Anthony, and the few cents contributed to those who officiate at the ceremony is considered a wise investment, as a sort of insurance. St. Anthony's reputation as the protector of the lower animals extends particularly to pigs. Fuller's "Worthies" says: "St. Anthony is universally known for the patron of hogs, having a pig for his page in all pictures, though for what reason is unknown, except, because being a hermit, and having a cell or hole digged in the earth, and having his general repast on roots, he and hogs did in some sort have something in common, both in their diet and their lodgings."

SEES HUSBAND'S PICTURE IN WAR FILM

After seeing a moving picture of her husband, Corporal Marcus J. Johnson, lying wounded in a hospital tent in France, Mrs. Anna Johnson, No. 4134 20th street, San Francisco, Cal., received a telegram from the War Department at Washington announcing his death of wounds on Oct. 15.

Mrs. Johnson attended a performance of "Under Four Flags," the third official Government film, at a local playhouse and saw her husband's face caught in a swift flash of the cinema camera. He was lying on a cot in a field hospital. It was apparently by mere accident that he was pictured, the tent flap being obviously accidentally blown to one side just as the camera's eye swept in that direction.

Corporal Johnson was sent to France last July. He was thirty years old and had for several years been in business here as a building contractor. Besides his widow he is survived by his mother and two sisters.

SNAILS ARE NUTRITIOUS

"All snails are edible and nutritious," says Canon Horsley in a note on British land and fresh water molluscs, just published. He goes on to say that even the common or garden snail, though insipid, is as nourishing as calf's-foot jelly.

There is a large white-shelled snail called Helix pomatia that is commonly eaten by connoisseurs in the south of England, while all over France, Italy and Spain several species are used as food. In France there are many snail farms, which yield a good profit to their owners. In the French and Italian quarters of New York snails can be bought, either alive or cooked, and at most of the French restaurants they are served *escargots farcis* being the most usual form of the dish.

Snails are easy to raise in large quantities. They need lime for making their shells, but they do not have to be fed, as they can find their own food, which is exclusively the leaves of many plants. They are most delicious when properly prepared and cooked, and, as Canon Horsley says, as nourishing as calf's-foot jelly.

Snail culture apparently has not yet made a beginning in this country, the few snails found on the market here being brought over from Europe alive in barrels and casks and sold by fish dealers in our large cities. Writing in the last Year Book of the Department of Agriculture, Mr. E. W. Rust suggests that the opportunities for snail-growing are really much better in the United States than in Europe. While in the Old World, the snail-grower generally has but a small piece of land on which the snails must be confined by a fence of special design, and where they must be regularly fed, in this country there is an abundance of waste land where these creatures might be successfully raised without attention, and as they do not wander far, they would not need to be confined. Mr. Rust states that the Mississippi Valley offers ideal condition for snail culture. There is no reason why snails should not be used to some extent as a substitute for oysters, which they resemble in flavor. Their feeding habits do not, as in the case of oysters, involve the possible danger of infection with typhoid and other diseases.

STRANGE WHITE TRIBE FOUND IN CHINA HILLS

A tribe of white men whose chief characteristic is their courage has been found in the western mountains of China by Dr. Joseph Beech, president of the West China Union University, at Changta.

Doctor Beech, who recently arrived in this country to aid in the Methodist Episcopal centenary campaign for $85,000,000 for missionary work at home and abroad, tells also of another race of white men, who greatly resemble Bohemians, to be found in the great hills.

"There are forty or fifty different tribes," Doctor Beech said, "all speaking different languages and all different in physical appearance in the mountains of west and southwest Szechuen. On our maps these tribes are called a part of China, but they are really independent, and have fought the Chinese from time immemorial.

"This tribe, resembling Anglo-Saxons, lives in the district of Sung Pan. It is described to me as consisting of large men whose bravery is considered a marvel by Chinese. 'They never run away,' a Chinese friend told me. 'They love to fight.'"

THE COOS COUNTY FORESTS

In Coos County, Oregon, on the western side of the Coast Range Mountains, through a primitive forest of fir and cedar the Lost River wends its way. In one of the most inaccessible parts which only the hardiest of "hikers" have penetrated the river makes a drop of nearly 100 feet. The overhanging bank forms a deep cave before which the water forms a gauzy curtain. The few who have viewed Lost River Falls have seen nature just as the maker designed it. As yet it is untouched by man.

Lost River empties into the East Fork of the Coquille River. This river also forms a cascade of rare beauty—the Cape Horn Falls. Here grows the myrtle tree, a very hardy tree, but one that cannot be transplanted. It furnishes a hard beautifully grained, high-priced wood, used in making nut bowls. The myrtle tree, although plentiful on the west side of the Coast Range is not to be found on the east side.

A still loftier cascade is to be found in the Camas Creek, where there is a drop of 200 feet. "Toe Head Falls," as it is called, is located in the recesses of an almost unknown forest. In this region beautiful fern fronds are to be found as tall as a man and taller.

Despite the hardships of penetrating the primitive forests of Coos County, visitors will be amply repaid for their arduous efforts in the magnificent examples of Nature's handiwork which abound in these wild regions.

FIRST ARTIFICIAL TEETH

It may not be generally known that the Father of his Country was the first American to wear artificial teeth. By the time the War of the Revolution had ended he had parted company with most of the outfit which nature had given him. An ingenious physician and dentist of New York City undertook at length a full set of artificial teeth. These are now, of course, a dental curiosity, and offer an additional proof of the heroism of our first President, for it is a matter of fact that General Washington wore those teeth for many years and, so far as we know, never complained of them. The teeth were carved from ivory, and riveted, wired and clamped to a somewhat ponderous gold plate. Three large clamps, in particular, figure conspicuously in the roof of the mouth, and must have caused difficulty, if not anguish. There were an upper and an under set; and the two were connected and held in position relatively by a long spiral spring on each side. Nevertheless, Washington wore them long and well; a fact sufficiently attested by the worn and dented condition of both teeth and plate. At the last account these teeth were the property of a dental institution in Baltimore.

AN ICE MINE

There exists at Coudersport, Pa., an ice mine. It was discovered some 18 years ago by a farmer who, noting a peculiar coldness—even in the warmest weather—of a certain portion of his farm, was led to dig there in the belief that he would find a deposit of silver. The mine or cave which he unearthed proved to be 40 feet deep and from 10 to 12 feet in diameter. At present, it is entered by means of a ladder, since it is situated on the side of a hill.

Geologists are not able to explain why the mine happens to be where it is, nor why the ice should form, in seeming opposition to the laws of nature, in summer and melt in winter, as it does in this instance. The ice is formed from a peculiar cold mist which comes through openings found all the way from the top to the bottom of the 40-foot shaft. As soon as warm weather arrives frost appears on the walls of the shaft and soon tiny icicles form rapidly, until in the warmest weather huge icicles, often 2 feet thick, reach from the platform at the top, to the bottom of the mine. The ice begins forming in May, and in October the thaw sets in.

A shelter was erected over the mine some time ago; but it had to be removed, as the ice melted when the sun's rays were kept from the mine.

The mine has been used as a cold-storage plant by the wife of the farmer, and she claims that eggs have been kept seven months in the natural refrigerator, and at the end of that period found to be in perfect condition. During the summer, the temperature of the mine ranges from 25 to 30 degrees above zero. This mine, notwithstanding the fact that it is open at the top, is warm enough on the coldest winter's day to keep vegetables without freezing.

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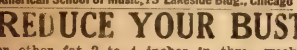

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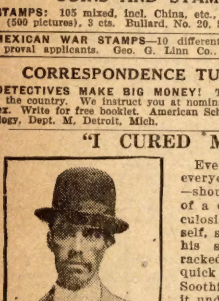

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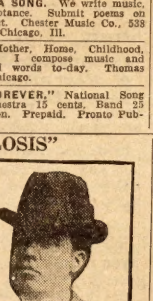

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